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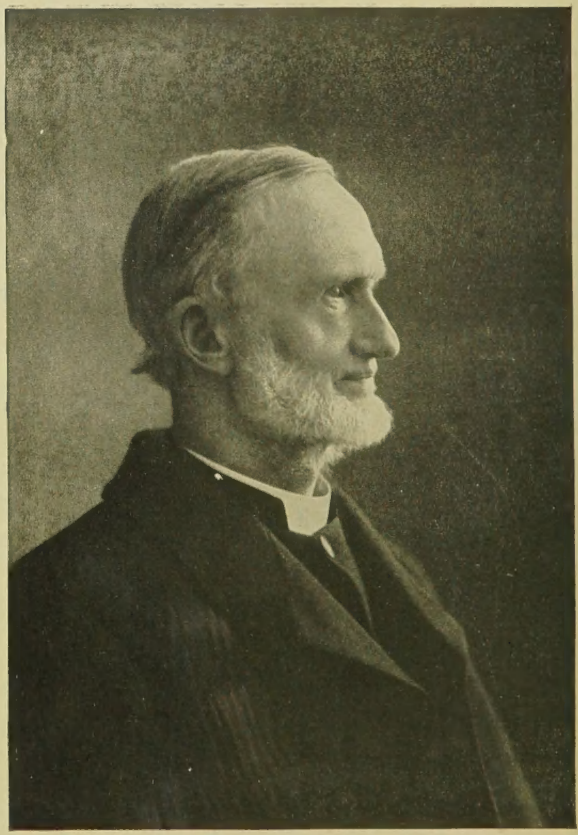

Wm. L. Watkinson

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SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS

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FROM

SCIENCE, NATURE, LIFE AND ART

BY

W. L. WATKINSON, D.D.

SELECTED BY

A. E SALMON

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FOREWORD

The selection and arrangement of the Illustrations contained in this volume have been prompted, not only by a desire to present in convenient form a small portion of the wealth which the late Dr. W. L. Watkinson so lavishly bestowed, but also as a little personal tribute to his memory.

During two terms of ministry in the circuit where Dr. Watkinson resided, the compiler was favoured with his friendship and unfailing help; and if the publication of this volume can in any way assist those with whose work he so greatly sympathized, the purpose of this volume will be fully realized.

No preacher of recent years had a wider knowledge of the best that had been thought and said in literature and science, and the contribution made by his published sermons to the literature of the Church has long been acknowledged throughout the English-speaking world.

The extracts contained in this volume are reproduced from the following books, published by the Epworth Press:—*The Education of the Heart*, *The Shepherd of the Sea*, *The Fairness of Trial*, and *Studies in Christian Character, Work, and Experience*.

A.E.S.

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS

From W. L. Watkinson

Adaptation

Very wonderful is the adaptation of desert plants to their extremely difficult conditions. In the deserts, as of Africa and Arabia, all the vegetation that exists has to maintain itself for some nine months in the year without a drop of rain. Many plants are, however, provided with means of storing water within their tissues; others have salt-secreting glands which absorb the heavy dews of summer, and convey the moisture to the interior of the plant. When we look with the microscope into the structure of the tissue of desert plants, we find innumerable features which prove that they are as much cared for under the conditions in which they live as the finest palm-tree or oak in more favoured places.

The humblest moss and the scrubbiest desert plant show marvellous structures in perfect adaptation to their respective wants, and are fitted to survive in their acrid homes.

Adversity : Benefits of

The eruption of Mont Pelee has shown that in volcanic ashes is an unexpected virtue. It is said that in St. Vincent, wherever the dust has fallen, the flowers are beginning to bloom with an unheard-of luxuriance. So in the catastrophes of life works a mystic virtue, giving to the graces vigour and beauty which otherwise they never seem to attain. In our efforts to do good disappointments and failures cut us to the quick; but even these sad hours through patience and hope work out for the furtherance of our joy. Going forth weeping, bearing precious seed, we shall doubtless return with songs, bringing our sheaves with us. The whole story of earthly suffering leads up to the eternal weight of glory. 'The noble army of martyrs praise Thee, O God.'

Affliction and Compensation

In the famous theatre La Scala, in Milan —which, with the San Carlo at Naples, is the largest opera-house in the world—there

is a mysterious box immediately above the stage on the fifth tier which appears to be always unoccupied. As a matter of fact, however, this box is never empty when opera is being performed. Screened from the gaze of the public, the most appreciative of all among the audience are following every note of the music from its recesses. Men and women sit in that box entranced—transported temporarily into another world, a world in which they can forget that they are not as the majority of their fellow creatures, and are able, if only for a few hours, to feel that no dark and hopeless veil exists between them and the rest of humanity. The occupants of this box are all blind. Some sixty years ago, a Milanese lady, who was the proprietress in freehold of a box in La Scala, bequeathed her rights to an asylum for the blind, on the condition that the box should for ever be devoted to the exclusive use of its inmates. I wonder if any spot in the wide world contains so much concentrated happiness as this box on an opera night. That they cannot see what is passing on the stage appears to concern them not at all. The music takes entire possession of their senses. And it is not only in music that they have become thus sensitive and appreciative, but in other faculties and affections

a vivid inward life seems to make up for lost senses.

Afflictions : Ministry of

An American said to me the other day, 'I have a conviction that the silent testimony of Helen Kelle , in the atmosphere of agnostic Boston, has a greater power to keep alive the sense of the greatness of the soul, its superiority to sense and its immortality, than most of the preaching of the time.' The blind porter at the gate of the gods leaves it somewhat ajar, so that the gleams of the everlasting may reach us more convincingly.

Bane and Antidote

It is a most interesting and suggestive fact concerning Mount Vesuvius that its slopes are rich in medicinal plants; competent observers declare that its desolate dells are veritable gardens of simples. Thus where sin burns, blasts, and blackens the most, God appoints His healing ministries, and provides precious antidotes for those ready to perish. Do not complain about your city surroundings. Witness a good confession. Where Mammon is worshipped testify that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses; in Vanity

Fair proclaim the seriousness of life; charm Sodom with the beauty of holiness; and show to those who have fallen the deepest, that there is a way to heaven even from the gates of hell. Set up God's altar by the side of the devil's throne, and pluck the brands from the burning.

Beauty of Character: How Attained

We are told by the naturalist that on their native rocks and ledges Alpine flowers are specially rich and gorgeous. The deep blue of the gentians, as well as crimson, rich reds, purple, gold-yellow, and pure white, are scattered in lavish profusion. Lowland flowers when transferred to Alpine gardens at 6,000 feet become richer and deeper and more vivid in colour. The reverse is equally true, for these mountaineers are neither so gorgeous nor so rich planted in the lowlands as on their native rocks and ledges; their colour fades, their glory is lost. Is not this a parable of the graces of life as cultivated on the lowlands of experience, or on its mountain heights?

Bible

Revelation justifies our intuition, teaching everywhere that all creatures and events are

subject to the will and purpose of an all-wise God. In the arrangement of his library Napoleon placed the Bible in the political section, and so far we may admit the correctness of his judgement. A considerable portion of it contains a record of the mind and purpose of God in action, as disclosed in history; whilst the prophetic portion is occupied chiefly in the anticipation of the ultimate triumph of the Almighty's programme and design. From the Book of Genesis to that of the Revelation we witness the evolution of an all-comprehending sovereignty; one that recognizes alike things great and small, and through a wise and just administration seeks the universal good.

Bible: How to Read it

Bonar somewhere regrets that his interest in the Bible was so largely intellectual rather than spiritual and devout; but many never get at all beyond the intellectual interest. They unfeignedly appreciate its histories, poetry, ethics, language, and its literature generally, yet fail to grasp the essential truth. Travellers familiar with the Chinese tell that they often seem incapable of looking *through* glass. Their eyes focus on the glass like a photographer's on the finder at the back of

the camera, and they remain utterly unable to see what lies beyond. It is a common thing with many to be similarly afflicted in the study of revelation; their eyes, focussed on its wisdom and eloquence, do not discern the eternal things far off, and the King in His beauty.

Christ: and Beauty of Character

Scientists are satisfied that the primitive world contained no proper flowers; plants of various kinds grew by the million, but all were colourless, flowerless, and the earth an immensity of green. But one day—for we must speak of a day—the plants responded to the touch of Nature's magic, the law of progressive colouration came into play, and the flowers appeared on the earth—white, orange, purple, lilac, blue, adorned with a thousand spots, stains, and streaks of loveliness. A leap indeed from the cryptogamic plant to the rose, the lily, the orchid! The answering uplift to this is what we want, and what we get, in Christ Jesus. In response to the divine impulse, the folded powers of the soul open to the sun. Not rarely the intellectual faculties of the converted become efflorescent, sometimes in an extraordinary degree; but always the character acquires a

new grace, whilst in life and action the doctrine of God is adorned in all things.

Christ and Conduct

'It pleased the Lord, for His righteousness' sake, to magnify the law, and make it honourable' (Isa. xlii. 21). This He did pre-eminently in all His teaching, finally sealing His testimony with the tremendous affirmation of the Cross. He gave the race a new sense of the awful sanctions and irreducible claim of the law which is a transcript of the holiness of God, blessed for evermore. We are not likely to pay much respect to the law of conduct whilst it is regarded merely as a matter of social convention and sanction, but we listen to it with awe as it comes from the lips of Christ stamped with the idiom of eternity.

Christ and the Formalist

About sixty years ago a peasant painter, named Millet, was born in France. By his contemporaries he was strangely ignored, but by none of them more entirely and angrily than by the academicians. These were the bitterest critics of the Nazarene of art, they scouted his works as utterly false and barbarous. Yet the artist in whom presidents and professors found no beauty is now universally

recognized as one of the masters of all time. When Christ came as a teacher sent by God, the professed moralists and the conventional religionists saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. The truth is He is infinitely more than an upholder of orthodoxies, a master of ceremonies, a guide to etiquette, or an authority in ecclesiastical law and churchmanship; and we shall utterly fail to understand His incomparable intrinsic merit unless we go to Him with deeper views than these, and an altogether different spirit.

Christ: Inspirer of Joy

Scientists assure us that in the ancient world the birds were songless, song being only a recent acquisition of theirs; there were plenty of cries of terror and pain, but nothing of the nature of music. One day, however, came the touch of Nature's magic, and, yielding to the mysterious impulse, the winged creatures broke into song. A big jump from the croak of the archaeopteryx, partly bird, partly reptile, partly fish, to the blackbird making the orchard melodious, the lark singing at heaven's gate, or the nightingale filling the night with music! This is precisely the kind of inspiration we want; and this 'the new creature in Christ Jesus' gets. The touch of

the Perfect Man harmonizes all the chords of our nature, attunes us to the eternal music of love.

Christ and Life

Renan spoke thus in a speech delivered by him at the grave of Edmund About: 'To tell the truth, I doubt whether the temple of my dreams is not the cemetery. Peace, which elsewhere is but a chimera, here only becomes a reality. Soon, I believe, we shall say with the preacher, "Happy are the dead."' But in the light of the great song of the Nativity we can have no sympathy with despairing words. The cemetery is not the temple of our dreams; peace is not a chimera among the living, a reality only among the dead.

Christ: A New Man in

Professor J. Arthur Thomson, treating of the mutations and uplifts of Nature, writes thus: 'We turn to Nature's method of making extraordinarily new things out of very old things. For this is what has happened in a great number of cases where something apparently novel has emerged. The old is, as it were, recrystallized. The mineral be-

comes a jewel. . . . There is no doubt that to make an apparently very new thing out of a really very old thing is part of Nature's magic.' Shall we then say that the order of grace follows that of Nature, and that the new creature in Christ Jesus is an extraordinarily new being brought out of one old and familiar?

Christ and Joy

The ancients fabled that Orpheus the god of music was drowned, and his lyre lost in the sea; hence water is musical. What the Greeks meant by this legend it is impossible to say; but perhaps they intended it to signify that the secret of harmony has perished from the world. Be that as it may, when the Son of God plunged into this gulf of dark despair, He recovered more than the lost lyre of Orpheus: He gave us again the secret of spiritual and eternal music, whatever may be the confusions and discords of earth and time.

Christ and Reality

An Eastern traveller confessed that he had been so often deceived by the mirage that when at last he saw the sea he could not believe that it was the sea, he thought it a bigger mirage than usual. But there is reality.

'When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!' In Christ the bright reality is ours. 'Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.'

Christian Character: Its Beauty

When a man's religion makes him egotistical, narrow, hard, and harsh, something is the matter with it. The fact is that right and love must go together. Love without right is a feeble sentiment, a wild-rose frail and faint; right without love is a stinging briar: united they bear the flower of paradise guarded by the austere sanctions which only enhance its charm in the eyes of the pure in heart.

Christian Character and the Commonplace

Superior intellect asserts itself in the extraordinary way in which it deals with ordinary tasks and occasions. The modest daisy was sufficient theme to secure for Burns a place amid the immortals; a single string stretched on a wooden shoe was all that Paganini needed to demonstrate the master minstrel; and a bit

of canvas a few inches square was ample to certify to all generations that Raphael was the prince of painters. And is not all this equally true in relation to character? Surely here we do not need great things to prove great qualities; for moral power, richness, and grace declare themselves in a way that cannot be overlooked or denied in stations and actions which have no other greatness. As Waller sings,

> Circles are praised, not that excel in largeness,
> but th'exactly framed.

Christian Outlook: The

Millet, the famous French artist, gave this direction to his brethren: 'Every landscape, however small, should contain a suggestion of the possibility of its being indefinitely extended on either side.' That is to say a true picture of scenery will suggest infinity; its margin, its frame, must not bound the imagination. However small the landscape, it must suggest the immeasurable, and its least spot of blue the infinity of the firmament.

Chastisement

Since New Testament times there has been a total change in the view with which these afflicted ones are regarded. 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.' No one spends much time about purifying iron, but the assayer is

prodigal of patience and trouble when he has gold in the crucible.

Choice

The metaphysician tells us that if a hungry ass found itself between a couple of trusses of hay equally attractive the perplexed animal would hesitate until it perished of hunger. That is not our situation; we are not called to judge between two things exactly alike or much alike, but between the two most unlike things in the universe—between the poor, unsatisfying life of the world and the discipleship of Christ, rich in peace and power, in blessing and hope.

Contemplation of Christ: Its Effects

John Gibson, the famous sculptor, writes thus in his diary: 'I renewed my visits to the Vatican. It is not to criticize that I go there, but to seek instruction in my art, which the Greeks carried to perfection. Those few masterpieces which have come down to us, though I have dwelled upon them thousands of times, still at every new visit are contemplated by me with fresh wonder and admiration, such is the influence which anything perfect both in design and execution, has upon the mind. Those grand

works of the Greeks are ever new, and always produce fresh enchantment however often they may be surveyed.' Thus must we linger over the pages of the New Testament, contemplating closely and lovingly the living, speaking, active Jesus, whilst He grows upon us, more and more filling our imagination, mind, and heart. We can grow in strength and grace and blessedness only whilst this is our habit.

Church and Politics

History reveals that the direct interference of the Church in civic and imperial affairs has not been invariably successful. Miss Martineau tells that when Carlyle wanted a new house he sallied forth on horseback, with a map of the world in his pocket; perhaps it was the disproportion of the large map that defeated the domestic quest. The theologian, with a mind full of immensities and eternities, of the cosmos and the ages, is not always the best interpreter of ephemeral matters. The unquestionably unrivalled contribution of the Church to society is in its benign action upon character and morals; as it enforces worthier ideals, and strengthens men to live purer and more unselfish lives, it makes possible the desirable legislation.

Do we with anything like constancy concentrate ourselves upon this our special mission, and so prompt government to act on the higher level?

Church and Rival Organizations

Whenever the agnostic attempts to settle the great moral and spiritual problems he finds that he has a great deal to battle with if he has not a Church next door. And whenever it is proposed to inaugurate a movement, or found an institution, for social and philanthropic ends, the outsiders are compelled to build on Christian foundations, and to find their inspiration in its faith and people. That excellent people are found outside the Church of Christ is no proof of its inefficacy, but quite the contrary; they owe the best part of all that they are to the fact that they were born in its light, that they live in its shadow. In a word, the Church of Christ is the source, the foundation, the bond, and the vitality of the crowning civilizations; and all whose privilege it is to share in the liberties and treasures of such civilization are infinitely indebted to the Church, however they may flout it. As Dante sings:

> Every good which out of It is found,
> Is nothing but a Ray of Its own Light.

Churchmanship and Character

It was the mission of the Lord Jesus to make manifest that no conventional decree, no ecclesiastical court, no theological sanction, no sacerdotal mint or imprint, can endow base character with value; the King's image is legitimate only when stamped on gold—otherwise the divine name is profaned. Churchmanship minus holiness of spirit and deed is one of the vainest forms of vanity. Ecclesiastical virtue is no substitute for natural virtue; conventional virtue for vital virtue; or verbal virtue for that which is practical. The Pharisees were theatrical; they professed a character they did not exemplify, in which they did not believe.

Circumstances: Man's Mastery of

The famous pictures of J. F. Millet were painted in a cold, damp room, without a fireplace and lighted by one little window, all his accessories, mediums, and instruments being of the humblest. Yet in this depressing outhouse, with the chill of poverty in his bones, rarely a gleam of success to cheer him, he created those masterpieces for which nations contend. Artists of another order require a comfortable atelier, studied lights, delicate tools, and purest colours; and even

then fail of fame. Why did Millet with all his disadvantages achieve such extraordinary distinction? The answer springs to every lip: Because it was *in* him!

Commonplace: The

Fabre writes concerning Nature: 'The smallest facts are often the most significant. Those minute details which are in danger of being regarded as puerilities are connected with the most solemn questions which it is possible for man to consider.' If an authority writes thus concerning entomology, may we not reasonably magnify the importance of the most obscure life, the results of the most trifling action?

Compromise

In *A Journey to Java* the traveller tells how 'the little children brought us large bunches of the water-lily and other flowers. Some posies were apparently composed of a remarkable and variegated flower that we had not seen before. Not until we had bought and examined them closely did we discover that this many-hued flower was in reality a number of detached petals from various flowers so cleverly fastened together that the collection appeared as one unusual

flower.' This faked flower reminds us of the eclectic creed of many people to-day. It is constructed from divers sources, some portions being petals from scriptural plants of truth and grace, cunningly combined with other elements gathered from the wild flowers of the jungle and the wilderness.

Conscience : Greatness of

The righteousness of God reveals itself *in greatness of conscience*. The Pharisee was emphatic on peppercorns, yet weak on the great principles of character and the primal duties of life. He resembled those Indians who are said to treasure gold-dust, but when they find a nugget forthwith bury it in the earth. Here, again, our Lord was deeply offended. Not that He under-estimated the significance of the minutiæ of ethics; this was far from Him: whatever implied any moral quality was sacred to Him who knew life so intimately, and who therefore realized how much depends upon faithfulness in 'that which is least.'

Conservation : Principle of

A superficial view of *Nature* might lead us to regard the world as little else than a past scene of failure and waste, whilst deeper

reflection will satisfy us that the divine end contemplated is unerringly reached. The sunshine of the geological ages might seem lost; yet treasured up in the depths of the earth it supplies the modern world with light, warmth, power, and beauty. We might easily infer that a similar waste is taking place now with the sunshine. By far the greater part of the sun's outlay of light and heat appears to be lost in the depths of space. The earth catches only the merest fraction. The planets and moon also intercept a trifle, but how small the portion of the mighty flood they can utilize! The rain seems wasted on salt seas and barren deserts. The forests teem with spores, seeds, germs, over and above what can possibly mature. The earth and water swarm with abortive life. The fragrance of millions of lovely flowers sweetens the unbreathed air. In every direction we witness what are commonly construed as signs of waste and failure; yet science will hear of no such a thing; it assures us that a law of parsimony runs through every domain of Nature, a law of conservation of material and energy that forbids any waste of either. In the great festivals of Nature twelve baskets are always reserved in the rear to gather the surplus; and when the lean years threaten, the econo-

mized treasures of matter and energy are forthcoming to sustain and complete the life of the world. The profoundest student cannot trace all the workings of the combined laws of lavishment and economy; but that both exist he is confident, and he is as certain of the one as of the other.

Conversion

They who have experienced the great change 'know that they have passed from death unto life'—a change of infinite significance. The Oriental proverb reminds us that 'a great bend must have a great straightening'; a serious defect calls for a radical remedy. Revelation throughout recognizes the seriousness of our false bias, and aims at a great straightening. It is no longer a matter of mere re-forming, but of a new creation, to which a range of moral perfections becomes possible, not to be conceived of in the old unregenerate days. 'Turn Thou me.' Everything is marvellously changed when God is brought into the scene, and when His action supersedes that of the creature. New lights, new powers, new attractions, new laws, and a new life, work moral miracles; the impotence and failure of the natural life are succeeded by triumphant strength.

Conversion: A Radical Change

As the scientist goes on to remark: 'A good deal of the important variation in both plants and animals is not the variation of a minute part or confined to one organ, but has really an inner physiological basis, and may be a variation of a whole organic system or of a whole tissue expressing itself at several points and in several shapes.' Such is the variation known as conversion; not the refinement of a minute part of the personality, or of any one organ, but an ennoblement of the whole organic moral system.

Conversion and Reformation

The psalmist's prayer: 'Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin,' is answered in the completed conversion of the penitent believer. In his deepest thought and purpose he awakes to the love of all righteousness, the hatred of whatever has the taint of sin. This is what Christian conversion means—that holiness becomes organic. Ray Lankester tells us that in the variation of plants and animals a variation in some related part of an organism may strike the eye of the onlooker as of the greatest

consequence, when in fact the decisive change in the character of the organism is 'an obscure change in an unseen group of cells,' easily overlooked. So an act of reform in a man's life in some particular habit or direction may be very prominent and excite special attention; but the real thing, that of permanent value, is the change that takes place in the hidden places of the heart, when, in the language of our Lord, a man is 'born again.'

Cross of Christ: The

The preaching of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; time, however, has vindicated the Crucified, and shown how entirely He is the Saviour of sinful men and the exclusive hope of the race. The Cross is mean in aspect, but sublime in essence; weak in philosophy, but strong in history; poor in logic, but grand in experience; incredible in theory, but irresistible in fact. To-day every suggested programme of salvation brings us back to Jesus Christ. 'What must I do to be saved?' Where shall I find peace, purity, hope? What response do our thinkers and guides make to this pathetic appeal? Consider their schemes of salvation, and you find that often,

without designing it, they bring us to the feet of the one divine Saviour.

Death of the Righteous

As in the Finland summer, at midnight the sun just dips below the horizon and no more, there is no division between the sunset and the dawn; the same rosy flush serves for both; so is the sunset of the saint, and the dawn of eternal day—one melts into the other with sweet surprise.

Decision

Listen to the wise words of the late Archbishop Temple: 'If you want to live a Christian life, do not dally with your purpose; do not fancy that you will find it easier to win your way by degrees, and that by a gradual change you may attain the same end, with less pain, than you fear will be given by a sudden wrench. Nothing can be a greater mistake. Press into the enemy's citadel at once: do not wait outside till he has had time to shoot you down. In with your heart and soul.'

Desire

A distinguished author writes: 'Those who consider want of money the worst of evils

are fools; there is a far more painful one, and that is a penury of desires.' Revelation never seeks the pauperization of life by destroying desire; it aims to secure the fullness of life by accepting our native desires, seeking only to sanctify them, to direct them to the right objects, and to cause them to work our complete happiness.

Development

In Miss Kingsley's book *Eversley Gardens* occurs this praise of her sweet domain: 'For unlike other works of art, there is no finality in such a garden. The picture once painted, the statue once sculptured, it is finished. But the garden goes on growing as long as time and love of it shall last, each succeeding year adding some fresh touch to the beautiful conception, and this Garden of Delight never fails in fresh surprises.' How suggestive is this of the soul growing in spiritual wisdom and understanding, in the knowledge and love of God, in the beauty of holiness! There is a morality that resembles the picture once painted, the statue once sculptured; ecclesiastical morality, like that of the Pharisees; calculated morality, like that of the schools. Here all is formal, mechanical; it may soon be learned, and once learned is final. But the

righteousness of God is a living thing. Unlike statue or picture, it has no finality; like a garden, it goes on growing whilst life and love of it shall last, each season adding to its charm, whilst it never fails in fresh surprises, and time does not breathe on its fadeless bloom.

Discipline

We learn, then, that the trials of the saints are not signs of the divine anger, but means of grace to sanctify them who are exercised thereby. The disciplinary process may wear the aspect of severity, the knife being its instrument; yet it must not be confounded with the judgement of God upon the children of disobedience. For whatever may be the bitterness of Christian experience it is worlds away from the suffering of eternal failure. The bleeding branch of pruning is far less to be dreaded than the burning branch of retribution. The knife is the enemy of the wild shoot, the befouling vermin, the diseased excrescence, the devouring parasite—never of the living branch.

Discipline : Its Object

That righteousness is the condition of the highest welfare of men and nations, and that

God by strange instruments and terrible visitations brings this truth home to those in peril of moral corruption and ruin, are two great lessons enforced by revelation. Vesuvius is a lesser evil to prevent a greater; and tyrants, wars, and adversities may be overruled by heaven to saving moral issues.

Discipleship: Imperfect

Gibbon relates that one of the Roman emperors by a strange vicissitude of fortune was brought from prison to receive the imperial diadem; and as a smith could not at once be found, the monarch sat for some hours on the throne of the Cæsars with the fetters still on his limbs. Do not Christians sometimes remind us of this strange sight? Their soul is brought out of prison, but relics of the old degradation cleave to them still, and the royal signs and ornaments of virtue strangely mingle with half-broken fetters of evil. Out of every such relic of the sad captivity ought we to grow, and not one evil thought remain.

Discipline: Its Object Beneficent

Science shows that the perfection of Nature at large is dependent upon certain chastening laws and forces. Prof. J. Arthur Thomson

observes that 'very successful organisms tend to a dangerous exuberance when they get away from the pruning-shears of Natural Selection.' Those shears are formidable weapons; keen-edged, and often apparently ruthless in execution; yet they create and conserve the perfection and glory of the world. What the gardener does in his little way, Nature is ever doing on a large scale—lopping off superfluous shoots, arresting wayward growths, checking extravagant developments, eliminating useless characters in beast, and bird, and tree,

> Lest, being over-proud in sap and blood,
> With too much riches it confound itself.

An analogous process is ever going on in the Church of God. In the best of men are remnants of the old self ever striving to assert themselves, and calling for rebuke and drastic discipline. If neglected, the branch in the true vine will produce fruits quite foreign to its affiance, which cannot be allowed to remain.

Disuse: Tragedy of

A recent writer has reminded us of the fate of Paganini's magic violin, which was left to his native city of Genoa on condition that

henceforth it should not be played upon—a fatal request, it would seem, for a peculiarity of wood is that as long as it is handled and used it lives, and wears but slightly; it is, however, no sooner laid aside than it begins to decay, and becomes the prey of insects. 'This magic violin, which might have thrilled the world for hundreds of years to come with its heart-searching tone, is becoming worm-eaten in its grand glass case, and will soon be a little heap of worthless dust.' The moulder-ing instrument is a figure of the selfish soul, of the life withdrawn from society in the interests of personal leisure and indulgence.

Divine Judgements

In describing the rare but terrible cyclones which periodically sweep North Queensland, E. I. Banfield writes: 'Nature is rational even in her most passionate moments. These twenty-year-interval storms comb out super-fluous leaves and branches, cut out dead wood, send to the ground decayed and weakly shoots, and scrub and cleanse trunks and branches of parasitic growths. All is done boldly, yet with such skill that in a few weeks losses are hidden under masses of clean, insectless, healthy, bright foliage. The soil has received a luxurious top-dressing. Trees and plants

respond to the stimulus with magical vigour, for lazy, slumbering forces have been roused into efforts so splendid that the realism of tropical vegetation is to be appreciated only after Nature has swept and sweetened her garden.' '*Nature is rational even in her most passionate moments.*' May we not believe that Providence is equally rational in those whirlwinds that sweep society, and which, whilst they occasion painful confusions, also cleanse, stimulate, and beautify the life of nations? If the naturalist discerns rationality in the cyclone, can we be far wrong in our recognition of an intelligent and a benign purpose controlling the tumult and fury of the people, and through discipline sweetening their life?

Doubt and Spiritual Hunger

By a materialistic, sensual, or worldly life, and the sophistry which goes with it, the reason and conscience may be so perverted as to deny all supernaturalism; but even then the spiritual instincts continue to assert themselves, and involve the sceptic in endless perplexity and inconsistency. In *The Journal of the de Goncourts* we read, 'What puzzles me is the intense sympathy Whittier forces me to feel for religious emotions I do not share, and for a simple faith, which I know

to be a delusion, to be philosophically all wrong. It is like hearing a great congregation singing, "Nearer, my God, to Thee." No one can hear it without feeling his heart swell —whether he believes in a soul or not.' 'The *Sanctus* of Beethoven, sung to-day after lunch, made me undergo a nervous emotion, and sent tears to my eyes. These religious chants stir up in me all the pains of my past life, and I, the sceptic, the unbeliever, on whom the eloquence of the flesh could have no effect, I feel that I could be converted by plain-song or by the music which comes of it.' So inevitable and inextinguishable are the spiritual affinities and demands of human nature; by logical legerdemain we cheat the brain, but the hunger of the heart is not to be denied.

Enthusiasm

Professor Seeley's dictum is often quoted: 'No heart is pure that is not passionate; no virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic.' And long ago Balzac wrote to the same effect: 'A reasoning passion is a depraved thing. Passion is beautiful only when it is involuntary and full of those noble outbursts in which selfishness has no place.'

> For naught's so sad the whole world o'er
> As much love which has once been more.

Environment: Its Importance

The Government is building a new magnetic observatory in a lonely pastoral district in Scotland, remote from all railways, because the present institution at Kew has become unsatisfactory owing to the proximity of electric lines; the delicate instruments, instead of registering cosmical movements, have taken to record the movements of the trams. The observatory has been removed from the disturbed area, and placed beyond all interfering surroundings. Has our environment become dangerous to our spiritual life, confusing our thought, numbing our conscience, sapping our will? If so, let us, in the power of the Spirit, forthwith renounce the situation with its temptations. So shall the grace of God have free course, saving us to the uttermost.

Environment: Influence of

Public attention has more than once been directed to dangers threatening Greenwich Observatory. This institution stands on a hill 150 feet high, but chimneys 250 feet high rise from the river-bed above the domes of the Observatory, and interfere with the observation of certain stars; whilst the disturbance occasioned by the hot air and smoke

discharged by these stacks causes serious trouble to the astronomer. Is not this a metaphor of the danger to our faith and peace by remaining on the more depressed levels of life? Living so nearly to the worldly, how many things intrude upon us and obscure the great truths by which we live! Soon they are only dimly seen; and when no longer vividly realized, how easy it is to deny them! Very different is the case when we live near to God. The Lick Observatory, on Mount Hamilton, California, standing on ground 4,000 feet high, is remote from all chimneys; it is nearer to the stars and beholds them with open vision. So to those who live on the higher ranges of thought, and feeling, and purpose, the great truths of revelation shine out with strong, commanding evidence. It is easy to see them, easy to believe them; they are as the stars of heaven for clearness. We believe 'because we must, by sight's compulsion.'

Environment: Triumph over

Amid the burning sands of the Sahara are bits of living green; in the snowy Alps a garden of flowers surprises the tourist; and in the heart of great sordid cities, where the environment seems utterly to forbid any sign

of heavenly things, Christ's eye brightens as it greets the various manifestations of a pure and intense spirituality, which the most colossal worldliness, selfishness, and materialism fail to blight. Think it not impossible to cultivate a godly spirit and life because you dwell in an impure atmosphere of worldliness. The naturalist finds that the leaves of trees are full of breathing and perspiring organs which the dust and smoke of the city choke. What then? The upper side of the leaf being suffocated the under side develops mouths which continue to breathe the vital air and keep the tree flourishing. So, imperilled by the city's fog, dust, and soot, let us be sure that our soul lies open to the heavenly universe, and breathing its purer, ampler air we shall live also, despite all secularizing and vulgarizing associations.

Environment: Triumph over

In Brazilian forests no objects are said to be so striking as the orchids. To give an idea of the beauty and splendid colourings of these flowers resort must be had to coloured plates, and even then but a faint idea of their magnificent appearance in their native sites can be given. Yet some of the most beautiful grow in forests so gloomy that they often

escape notice, and it is surprising that they flourish where they get so little light. So in dim and sordid scenes we welcome with surprise shining examples of integrity, tenderness, and sacrifice, of simple and sublime goodness, not to be excelled by any instances of cloistered virtue.

Evil: Its Futility

Various systems and movements which cause us anxiety sometimes present the appearance of progress when there is no reality of progress, for they are contrary to the great tides of God's purpose and operation. When Parry attempted to reach the North Pole, he discovered that the ice-floes on which he was journeying drifted southward faster than he and his companions walked north; so at the end of a long day's march they found themselves four miles farther from their destination than they were in the morning. It is sometimes thus with systems, institutions, and movements of an equivocal character, which appear to advance when in reality they do nothing of the sort. It is an illusion; they move in the wrong direction, the tide is against them; they are making northward to the realms of darkness and barrenness, whilst the river of God sets southward to the lands of the sun and summer.

Evil: Persistence of

A recent writer on natural history notes the disturbing anomalies of the tropics. 'Surely of all the million of beautiful things in this beautiful world, palms are amongst the most lovely! Certainly parts of the tropics are earthly Edens. But beautiful objects were not the only ones prominent in this journey, and the presence of the scaly reptiles we saw every few minutes was not altogether in harmony with the graceful palms. They seemed, indeed, to be somewhat out of place, "survivals," as indeed they are, of an earlier age of the world, when gigantic saurians—creeping, walking, swimming, and flying—were the ruling existences, in a world of slime and mud and ooze, and not in accord with these beautiful trees, which seem as if they should rather be associated with bright-coloured birds and insects than with these crawling, saw-backed monsters.' Is there not often in Christian character and experience a felt discord corresponding to this tropical anomaly? Amid much that is pure, generous, and beautiful in the disposition and life of the saints, are they not sometimes conscious of disturbing 'survivals' of days happily passed away?

Evil: Seductive

The bushmaster of South America is the most terrible of all serpents: it is not only highly venomous, it also grows to a great length, and is very aggressive. For its venom there seems absolutely no antidote. He who has the misfortune to be bitten by it seldom lives longer than twenty minutes; the whole of his blood is turned to a frightful corruption. Yet the creature is most beautiful—a sort of living rainbow, every colour being beautifully shown with superb iridescence as it glides and shimmers in the sunlight. Meet symbol of the power of evil transfigured in the imagination and passions of faithless souls!

Experience: Variations of

It is pleasant to remember that 'from Marah to Elim is only a morning's march'; but the converse is true also, that it is only a morning's march from Elim to Marah. As Charles Reade puts it: 'It is terrible how quickly a human landscape, all gilded meadow, silver river, and blue sky, can cloud and darken.' Can we coax the nightingale or swallow to tarry? Can we transform the rose-bush into an evergreen? Can we fix the rainbow? Can we charm the purple butterfly to stay

the year round? Never. Nor can we be sure of earth's rarest things for a day.

Excitement: Harmful

Some of the trees on the Thames Embankment cannot thrive because they are deprived of rest at night. Powerful electric lights take up the work when the sun sets, and the trees languish from arboreal insomnia. The light, not the kind of it, does the mischief, for electricity stimulates growth. The too long continued light causes the trees to languish, they need intervals of rest. And human life withers under abnormal stimulation; its best characteristics disappear, its blossoms are blighted, and its fruits are spoiled as by the caterpillar. Diligence and a peaceful mind work wonders through a long life; but strain, fear, friction, haste, are of the devil, and destroy both body and soul.

Failure and Success

The whole path of progress is littered with the ruins of accounted failure, and yet it was the path of progress. What we owe to honest, self-sacrificing, heroic, meritorious, yet defeated endeavour, is the unknown sublime of history. A recent traveller in the

Desert of Cathay writes: 'The tracks of wayfarers get effaced, and many among them lose their way. On every side there extends a vast space with nothing to go by; so travellers pile up the bones left behind to serve as road-marks.' Ah, pile up bones! To a large extent in the march of civilization we are guided by the wreck and ruin of earnest pathfinders who went before us; we are furthered by their privations, sufferings, and death. The bones of the martyrs of science, of politics, of commerce, are our road-marks; but none of them perished in vain; by their courage and sacrifice we are put on the track of the promised land.

Faith and Knowledge

Doubt is no more the starting-point of philosophy than it is of theology; neither is philosophy developed out of a void of scepticism, but out of a reality of faith, whether it is the fullness of faith or not. In a letter to Lord Farrer, Darwin writes: 'If we consider the whole universe, the mind refuses to look at it as the outcome of chance—that is, without design and purpose.' Faith was the starting-point of Darwin's philosophy, an instinctive belief in the rationality of the universe. When he came to deal with any

particular theory of the cosmos he would hesitate, reflect, determine; but he began with the faith that some Power had organized it with all it expressed of wisdom and beauty.

Faith Triumphant

As Bonar writes: 'Clasp the Cross even with a cold heart, and if you cannot rejoice you can cling.' If our grasp is faint, the Hand that grasps us is strong; none shall pluck us out of it; it shall save to the uttermost.

Fear of God

These are only different ways of stating the same thing. They express altogether distinct and antagonistic views of life. The two classes may often look much alike, yet they are really profoundly different; they constitute an absolute contrast and antagonism. Judging by appearance, we might imagine certain plants to belong to the same family; but the botanist knows that the resemblance is wholly superficial the plants being of entirely different types: in like manner some animals which appear to belong to the same species are structurally distinct, the anatomist knowing that they have no relationship what-

ever. He who fears God and he who fears Him not may have much in common; the difference between them, however, is practically infinite. Their spirit is different, the principle by which they regulate life, their motive, and their aim. We must obey either the divine will or our own; and between these courses a great gulf is fixed.

Fallen : Contempt for the

We respect successful men, the successful of all sorts; we believe in the triumph of power and cleverness. And we are not always particular in investigating the causes of success; enough that men excel and shine. On the other side, we cherish something like contempt for those who fail, without inquiring too curiously into the causes of their failure. As Joaquin Miller observes: 'A combination of circumstances, a long chain of reverses that refuses to be broken, carries men far down in the scale of life without any fault whatever of theirs. A similar but less frequent chain of good fortune lifts others up into the full light of the sun. The world watching the gladiators from its high seat in the circus will never reverse its thumbs against the successful man.' This is largely true also in regard to the lapsed in faith and

character. In our heart we despise them. How foolishly they have acted! What chances they had! What a position they occupied! What a future they have thrown away! We conclude that they deserve the dishonour and wretchedness which fall to their lot. But the truly spiritual do not reason thus. They know themselves too well—their personal weaknesses, hesitations, and narrow escapes.

Fallen: Their Restoration

There is large hope even for those who have gone very far indeed. In one of the Continental museums is a fine marble statue which was found broken into hundreds of pieces. The fragments were carefully collected, and with infinite care and patience fitted together; at length a seemingly impossible task was accomplished, and the statue stands in all its original completeness and beauty, none the worse for the smash and the long burial in the dust. It is a parable of Christ's ability to restore sadly shattered souls. Mind in whose face you shut the door! Take care what fractured vessel you heedlessly fling to the rubbish in the void! There is no heresy like that of looking with incredulity on souls gone wrong.

Force: Its Weakness

As expressed by James Russell Lowell: 'All history shows the poverty and weakness of Force, the wealth and power of Gentleness and Love.' Its teaching is that empire-builders must remember that 'pride and violence dig their own grave,' and that therefore justice and patience must order their doings.

Fretfulness

I once saw a portion of the flooring of a mediæval prison. The oak was cut into diamond-shaped points so as to be as hurtful as possible to the captive; and the walls being of the same material, he could not lean, sit, lie, or stand without disturbance and pain. The fretful live in that chamber. There is a better lodging. 'After they had committed themselves to their Lord for protection, they betook themselves to rest. The pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber, whose window opened towards the sun rising: the name of the chamber was Peace; where he slept till break of day, and then he awoke and sang—

> Where am I now! Is this the love and care
> Of Jesus, for the men that pilgrims are!
> Thus to provide! That I should be forgiven!
> And dwell already the next door to heaven!'

Future: Christian Teaching Respecting the

The most reasonable view that we can take of the present is that it forms a period of preparation for something beyond; revelation throughout thus represents it, and certainly this view harmonizes best with all that we observe and experience. It is impossible to think that this life of seventy years is complete in itself. A great writer declares: 'That which is unfinished is nothing.' But this fugitive story is a chaos of unfinished thoughts, purposes, and things; and there is no rational explanation of it, except it is regarded as the first stage of a great future. And, whilst the incompleteness of our intellectual education is recognized, in no direction is this view of human life seen to be more assured than in relation to our spiritual nature and aspiration. How important, then, that life should answer life's great end, and that when the next stage arrives that promises so much, we should be ripe for it!

Future: Ignorance of the

The knowledge of the future denied to us all is also denied to our statesmen, and yet how frequently are they abused for lack of forethought! We, who know not what a day

will bring forth, expect a prescience in our rulers that is to provide for a distant future. On the injustice of this, hear what a distinguished philosopher has to say: 'It were well perhaps that we should realize how large is the realm of human affairs which is beyond either human insight or control, and which must be for ever left in the hands of Providence or Fate. If we ask what are the Political Problems whose solution lies beyond the reach of human ken, and which must be entrusted for their remote future effects to Providence or Fate, we may say that they include nearly all questions of a complex International character, and those where the future of the conditions on which they depend can neither be foreseen nor forestalled from the limited outlook of the Present. All this is by way of showing that we cannot altogether take the government of the world into our own hands, however clever we may be, but must always leave room for Destiny, for the Unexpected, the Providential.' And yet if our statesman does not prove a prophet we stone him! When legislation turns out futile, it is well to remember the limited horizon within which we all work. The future event cannot be calculated as the astronomer calculates an eclipse.

Future and Present

Mr. W. H. Hudson tells how he climbed a church tower that had a peal of eight big bells. The effect of the chimes was too awful for words. In less than three minutes it became unendurable. It was all terrible, shrieking, crashing, roaring, piercing the brain like a steel weapon, and it would have sent him out of his senses altogether if he had remained longer; yet at the distance the frightful discord resolved itself into mellow music. To-day we are in the heart of a confused, roaring, hideous world that might well drive us to madness and despair; yet let us wait a while, obedient, trustful, patient, and the alarming noises that now affright the air shall prove Sabbatic music calling the race to a higher and holier life. They who have got the due distance hear 'the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the ages' (Rev. xv. 3).

Gladness and Christ

Since Christ came it is our right and duty to live in supreme joyfulness, although numbers

of Christians fail to understand that this is the case. Gardeners uproot every sweet daisy that springs on the lawn; they seem to think that monotonous green is the ideal thing, and not the decorated sod as God designed it: thus many Christians will not allow their experience to go beyond a sober tint, sternly suppressing the spontaneous, upspringing emotions of gladness which are the flowers of the soul. It is a serious error. Easter-day proclaims that henceforth a pure mirth is possible to us, and every believer may walk in the sunshine.

God : Our Consciousness of

It is reported that when the attendant drew up the window-blind, and the morning sun shone on the dying artist, Turner, taking his last look of the rising orb, exclaimed, 'That is my god.' Such is the confession of, perhaps, an increasing number; they know no divinity beyond nature's loveliness and wisdom. John Stuart Mill held 'his wife's memory as a religion'; and the sublimest thing that many hope for, and that which becomes the last object of their faith and reverence, is human affection. Patriotism, Science, Art, and Literature, Justice, Beauty, Goodness, Love, and Truth are the exalted

ideals to which we may aspire, but altogether in the pagan spirit, ignoring God and the great hope which springs out of faith in Him.

God: Existence of

No great thinker of our generation has felt the difficulty of recognizing design in Nature more acutely than Darwin, or stated the case more fairly, and it is instructive to study his position. The general aspect of the glorious universe made it impossible for him to believe in chance. So he writes: 'Another source of conviction in the existence of God, connected with the reason, and not with the feelings, impresses me as having much more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty, or rather impossibility, of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity.'

God in History

What a ghastly history is that of secret diplomacy! In the cabinets of princes, fraud and truculence have become fine arts; practised through ages, they have attained a disastrous perfection. Those 'star-chambers'

are littered knee-deep in 'scraps of paper,' and the subdued whispers of the diplomats cost the lives of millions. But it is reassuring to remember that God 'stands within the shadow' of the gilded slaughter-house, to confound, to overrule, to thwart the murderous counsels. The God of revelation is the God of nations, and all the dark secrets of imperial conclaves are open secrets to Him who compels their most sinister decisions to subserve His vast and beneficent design. The nations are not left to the mercy of subtle and ambitious tyrants. Clever as they may be, and powerful, they make mistakes which involve their ruin.

God and the Ordering of Life

In a letter to an anxious friend, William James writes: 'A certain tranquil confidence in the right ordering of the whole makes me indifferent to some circumstances where you would fret.' Let us, then, fix our attention on this manifest movement of the creation, keeping ourselves in the love of Him who ordains it, obeying the laws that govern it, and all things shall work for our individual perfecting and glorification. Seek 'a tranquil confidence in the right ordering of the whole,' get into step with the stately march, and all movements, surroundings, and experiences

shall ennoble *you*, forward *you*, and make *you* a sharer in the final glory.

God and Human Limitations

Ought we, children of a day and knowing nothing, to be surprised that the universe exhibits works and movements surpassing our comprehension? When Michael Angelo was in the midst of building St. Peter's, the cardinals accused him of incompetence, and of destroying the work of his predecessors. But the artist declined to justify himself, and refused all discussion. Said he, 'I am not obliged to communicate either to you or to any one that which I ought or wish to do. Your business is to look after the expenses. The remainder is my affair.' When the workmen complained, he replied, 'Your business is to build, to hew, to do joiner's work, and to carry out my orders. As to knowing what is in my mind, that you will never learn, for it would be against my dignity to tell you.' How much more, then, shall the Architect and Builder of the universe surpass our knowledge and smile at our criticisms? 'For God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against Him? For He giveth not account of any of His matters' (Job xxxiii. 12, 13).

Good and Evil

A plan has been recently developed by the municipalities of the Niagara frontier for the building of a vast tunnel to provide for the disposal of the sewage of a large city, and at the same time to make it produce electric power; the malodorous refuse will first light the city, and the remainder will be converted into fertilizers to enrich and beautify the landscape. It is a parable of the divine government. God is ever bringing light out of darkness, beauty out of rottenness, good out of evil. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder shall He restrain.

Goodness: Permanence of

In the south of France, cassia, jasmine, tuberose, violets, jonquils, and other blooms are cultivated on a large scale, being ultimately sold to the distillers. They make a very pretty sight when first laid down at the factory door, but far less pleasing is the discoloured heap which consists of the same golden flowers after they have suffered a sad change in a cauldron of boiling lard; yet if their loveliness has been sacrificed in a vulgar ordeal, their essence, the treasure of their fragrance,

is not lost; that is secure, and goes forth to refresh life in many climes. Thus in the process of years, in many a bitter ordeal of toil and pain, does the surface-beauty and glory of humanity perish, and in age and death we are pathetic creatures indeed: but the choice essence of life and the delicate purity and sweetness of the soul need not perish; the supreme excellence distilled through the painful years goes up finally as a sweet odour to the throne of God.

Grief: Its Ministry

The heritage of pain has become the path of progress, of perfection, of peace. It is so as concerns the individual. The life that has never been driven back upon itself has not yet come into possession of itself. As Professor Mahaffy records: 'Even the commonest mind is forced by grief out of its commonness, and attacks the world-problems, which at other times it has no power or taste to approach.' Here is the Divine purpose of the grief that out-measures the measures of the mind. And as with the individual, so with the race, conflict and endurance are the conditions of progress.

Heart: and Reason

The heart of man is not infrequently his most contemptible part: whilst every other faculty has been nurtured to its highest, those fine feelings distinctive of our humanity are starved. One of the fairy tales of botany is the strange habit that the foliage of the poinsettia close around the flower has of turning to a splendid scarlet, which is often wrongly regarded as the blossom itself; the actual bloom is a most insignificant little thing. Now, just as the leaves of this fashionable plant are rich with gorgeous, glowing colour, whilst the real flower is miserably meagre; so men laboriously train their secondary faculties to even a brilliant perfection, the supreme organ of love and sacrifice being permitted to dwindle into insignificance.

Holy Spirit: and Holiness (1)

'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these' (Matt. vi. 28–29). If, then, we are to be free from consuming care in the worldly life, we ought to be no less so in the culture of the soul. The mighty forces of infinite Nature

are working in the bulb of the lily, and have made it lovely and fragrant without more ado; and if we thought more of the strengthening of the heart by the indwelling of the Almighty Spirit, there would be less need or disposition to labour and fret, as we so often do, about the concerns of the soul.

Holy Spirit: and Holiness (2)

John Ruskin writes concerning art: 'Is not the evidence of *ease* on the very front of all the greatest works in existence? Do they not say plainly to us, not "There has been a great effort here," but "There has been a great *power* here"?' This is equally true in relation to surpassing Christian character. The completest and purest life is not the result of irksome effort, but an expression of power; they who charm us most are not those who show signs of tension, but those on whose 'very front' is the evidence of ease. Strong motive, a firm faith, warm affection, the full assurance of hope exclude morbid strenuousness, and make ideal saints.

Holy Spirit: and Life-Energy

Sir W. M. Conway, in his *Crossing of Spitzbergen*, relates how 'before midnight the sun shone brightly, but there was no warmth

in his beams. At the same altitude above the horizon in India his rays would be hot enough to give a sunstroke.' Such a midnight sun, shining more or less brightly on the Jewish and Gentile worlds, with little warmth in its beams, preceded the Advent; with the Advent that sun broke forth in his strength, not only illuminating the moral world with marvellous light, but also sending forth waves of pulsating life to quicken all sympathetic souls into fruitfulness and beauty, as the tropic noon kindles Nature into her last fruition and glory. This life-giving virtue is the salient feature of the Christian dispensation. Whilst it exalts the moral ideal, and renders it more luminous and authoritative, its unique glory is found in the fact that it inspires the constraining, lifting, driving power essential for the realization of the ideal. 'That we may know the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ' (Eph. i. 19–20).

Holy Spirit: and Life To-day

Extraordinary revelations of spiritual power are not to be considered as confined to the Apostolic Age. We have just seen that whilst scientists recognize in geological periods 'a

persistent progress of life to a higher plane,' they also recognize in 'the life of species sudden fundamental advances,' 'expression points,' in which the underlying inscrutable force conspicuously declares itself. What are the wonderful revivals which periodically gladden the Church but such 'sudden fundamental advances,' 'expression points,' in which the Spirit of God demonstrates Himself in the kingdom of souls in such a manner as to excite the attention and wonder of mankind? As a rule, the indwelling Spirit works silently, and is revealed only in 'the persistent' moral progress of the race; but ever and anon, 'suddenly there' comes 'from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind,' filling the Church, shaking the world. 'Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out' (Song of Songs iv. 16).

Holy Spirit: and Moral Transformation

'When one contemplates the unpromising origin of the apple of to-day, and the rich assortment of fruits here higher in the scale than it, imagination delights to dwell upon the wonders which await the skill of a horticultural genius. The crude beginnings of scores of pomological novelties are flaunted

on every side. The patient man has to come.' The optimism is justified, for our choicest fruits have been produced by skilful culture out of crabbed and poisonous berries of the jungle. So from the wild grapes of unregenerate life does the Spirit evolve delightful clusters of fruit; gifts, energies, and passions once perverted become pure and beautiful, supposing Christ to be the gardener.

Humility (1)

'There are souls who die out, after burning with unsurpassable moral beauty and grandeur, without ever having found a way, and even without ever having felt the need, of revealing themselves to others,' writes George Sand. Such is truth and reality. It is good before God, approved of Him, blessed by Him, and therefore asks no further witness, does not feel the need of any other. The sentient flower born to blush unseen is content in its own sweetness; the thinking jewel in the depths, reposing in its own pure ray, does not crave the sun. We may well suspect our genuineness when the opinions, praises, and rewards of men occupy much of our thought or affect our actions. Happy are we if the smile of God be our quest, our inspiration, and our exceeding great reward.

Humility (2)

The Creator never appears obtrusively in the creation. His works speak for themselves, and thus best speak for Him. The great Reality is invisible; or, in the paradox of Victor Hugo, 'God is the invisible evident.' The modesty of Nature reappears in the spirit of our Lord, in whose life and ministry there is no trace of ostentation, only a manifest desire to avoid whatever savoured of it. We do not wonder, therefore, that His severest censure is passed upon the pietists who courted the limelight. 'How can ye believe, which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?' (John v. 44). How anxiously He strives to bring His hearers face to face with God, that they may find in Him, and in Him alone, their motive, strength, and reward! And the truest men are content with this.

Immortality: and the Present

Only in the thought of immortality determined by the faithfulness of the present time is the inertia of the soul overcome and our days filled with purpose and passion. Remember life's brevity and immense significance. As J. F. Millet's peasant mother warned her brilliant son: 'If a man would live well, let

him fetch his last day to him and make it always his company-keeper.'

Individuality

We are told by one of the best authorities on perfumes that there are experienced rose-cultivators who can name many varieties of rose in the dark simply from the smell, and that no two varieties possess the same odour. What is called the pure odour of the rose is unique, indefinable, incomparable. Some roses possess very delicate fruity odours. One variety has an odour of peach, another of apricot, another of melon, another of violets, another of pink, while others recall the odours of hyacinth and mignonette. The odours of many are so soft and indefinable that comparison is impossible. But this manifoldness and distinction of nature finds its most exquisite expression in the uniqueness of humanity. Each soul is like a star, and dwells apart; every man is his own parallel. No soul has a duplicate. Each human personality is the incarnation of a distinct thought of God, bearing express imprints, and perceiving, interpreting, and realizing the universe in its own private, privileged way. No two spectators see the same rainbow; and no two souls see life and the universe in exactly

the same light, or give them exactly the same explanation.

Individuality in Christian Experience

Do not let us seek to conform our character in every particular to that of others, even when those others are the best. Birds constantly pick up the notes of alien songsters until their own music is lost in irritating imitations; artists injure their original power by undue deference to popular masters; and sometimes Christian character is warped and unlovely because it has lost its spontaneousness, and is being coerced along lines foreign to the man. Let fir, pine, box, or myrtle realize itself according to its nature; so shall each and all best glorify God, and beautify the place of His sanctuary.

Indulgence

A most popular proverb declares that, 'To be forewarned is to be forearmed'; but is it so? Too often we are found exposed and helpless, although the most solemn warnings have been given us. 'How could I fail to win?' said Frederick the Great, after the battle of Rosbach; 'Soubise had seven cooks and one spy—I had seven spys and one cook.' Some modern military disasters are

explained by a similar excess of indulgence over vigilance. And in life we are often surprised and vanquished because of our lack of caution, anticipation, and seriousness; we are worldly, carnal, and careless, and do not duly note when we are being led into temptation. We may by attention and prayerfulness form a habit of forethought. We may see a sin beforehand in all the ghastliness and suffering which alas! too often are not realized until too late. When you contemplate a step, think of all it implies. We may penetrate the future, picture it, and so realize it that we shall be effectually warned off from alluring temptations.

Infirmity

An African proverb declares that 'A lame man is the porter at the gate of the gods.' How a saying of this kind originated in that quarter we do not know, yet it serves to show that the African has perceived that in the economy of the universe a place and ministry are reserved for infirmity. The Christian revelation makes this cheering truth entirely clear.

Inspiration and Genius

A few elect souls possess extraordinary faculties of insight and expression. Victor

Hugo writes, 'The production of minds is the secret of the abyss,' and it pleases the Supreme Spirit ever and anon to call forth spirits of rarest power and vision. We must remember that revelation recognizes the great poets, philosophers, and artists as being divinely inspired; and we have no other way to describe genius than to speak of Plato, Socrates, Virgil, Dante, Angelo, Shakespeare, and their peers as being inspired.

Inwardness of True Religion

'The kingdom of God is within you.' Nature in many ways teaches that the main factor in fashioning all organisms is an interior mysterious energy. Plants are rendered artificially Alpine by being kept in an ice-box at night and fully exposed to the sun by day; but although such treatment succeeds in giving the plants certain Alpine characteristics, the effect is entirely superficial and temporary; the structure of the plant is untouched. By subjecting chrysalides to unaccustomed temperatures variations of colour are produced and slight changes in form also occur in the adult creature; but whilst the markings of the insects are modified, the species of moth and butterfly are not changed by any treatment of this kind: the organism remains

true to itself, steadily refusing to be fashioned from the outside. This is specially the case with human character; it is determined from within, and whilst the environment may affect it in certain superficial particulars, it can persist in spirituality, purity, and unselfishness although its environment be material, polluted, and callous in the extreme. Strengthen the inner life by thought, prayer, faith, and discipline, and you shall dwell safely even where Satan's throne is.

Joy under Difficulties

A traveller on the Amazon writes: 'At the time of our visit, this town has twenty-eight native inhabitants, of whom four suffer from chronic rheumatism, eight from old age and arterio-sclerosis, one from hernia, one from erysipelas, and seven from chronic malaria. Bread, matches, and sugar are not obtainable at any price, yet four people make a living making fireworks! The fireworks are used for their festivals.' But we need not go so far afield for instances of this inextinguishable cheerfulness; we constantly see in our own midst a native joyousness asserting itself in the most miserable circumstances. Human nature will not be denied its birthright of gladness; its faith and hope survive all

tragedies; despite outrageous fortune, its incurable belief remains that it has a right to be happy; we illumine the abyss of our wretchedness with festal lights, and garnish the memorials of our sorrows with flowers; and we may rely upon it that the persistent instinct testifies to the gracious character and design of Him who implanted it.

Joy and Circumstances

Sir Martin Conway wrote from Polar regions: 'Now that the short northern summer has set in, flowers were opening on all sides. A veritable Arctic garden surrounded the tents, for the ground was gay with blossom. . . . It was strange to meet again in this remote region so many plants that I had found by the glaciers and amongst the crags of the Karakoram Himalaya. . . . Here they all were again, as bright, and maintaining themselves as happily in the heart of the Arctic regions as on the backbone of Asia.' As the explorer found the identical strong bright flowers in widely sundered regions, so St. Paul found equal satisfactions and possibilities in the most strongly contrasted latitudes of circumstance. 'I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned

the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want' (Phil. iv. 12).

Knowledge and Admiration

More than a century ago Edmund Burke wrote: 'It is our ignorance of natural things that causes all our admiration.' And those who held this philosophy prophesied that as science grew admiration of nature would abate;—understanding the causes of its glory, the rainbow would fade in our eyes; comprehending the structure of the flower, the rose would smell less sweet; penetrating the secret of the stars, the heavens would be robbed of romance. But has this been the effect of a fuller knowledge of nature? Certainly not. During the last century science advanced immensely, yet it has not spoiled the poetry of natural things; on the contrary it has intensified our wonder and admiration—the mystery and splendour of the world were never more vividly realized than now. It is thus with the law of righteousness. The more fully it is expounded to our understanding, conscience, and heart, the more intensely do we appreciate its goodness and beauty.

Knowledge : Expansion of

Many years ago the Czar Nicholas determined to have the finest observatory in the world, and he instructed the famous Wilhelm Struve to see that it was built, giving him practically *carte blanche* as regards expense. It was built at Pulkowa, near St. Petersburg. The buildings and equipment are magnificent. When all was finished, the Czar came to inspect it, and after being shown over the observatory, turned to the director and asked simply whether he was satisfied; to which the diplomatic astronomer replied that he was—*for the moment*. The man of science realized that whatever is done in the investigation of the heavens is only tentative, and that new and grander instruments are soon requisite to search the secrets of the ever-expanding dome. How much more is it true that in our knowledge of Christ we can be satisfied only for the moment! Each day should bring us a clearer vision, a richer appreciation, a firmer hold of the truth of the gospel.

Labour : Dignity of Honest

To show their sense of the dignity of work, the Chinese emperor on one day of the year

holds the plough, and the empress works the loom; but we need no royalty to toy with the instruments of toil to persuade us of the glory of humble service; the Majesty of the skies has consecrated the workshop by His presence and glorified work by His example.

Life and Christ

At one extremity of the vegetable world the air-plant and orchid, ethereal things usually far up in the high forest trees, draw their nourishment from the dew and light of the blue heavens in which they are embosomed, and apparently glance superciliously upon the earth far below, with which they are little concerned; whilst at the other end of the scale are those Alpine plants known as geophytes, from the fact that the chief portion of their existence is spent underground. The godly are duplicates neither of the air-plant aloof in the heights, spurning the ground, nor of the geophyte buried in the dust; rather do they answer to the lovely plants of the temperate zone, which at one and the same time take firm hold of the earth and drink in the celestial influences of sun and shower, starring the landscape with their beauty, filling the air with their sweetness.

Life : Its True Wealth

One day in the town of Sonora, in the southern mines of California, after a very heavy rain and freshet, a man was leading his mule-cart up the steep principal street, when his foot struck upon a large stone; he stooped down to remove it, and found it was a solid lump of gold, about twenty-five pounds weight, which had been exposed by the storm, and many hundreds of people had passed over it daily. So do we daily blindly trample on blessings richer than all the wealth of California. There is the goodness we *misconstrue*. We count sublime things commonplace, and reckon as losses and disappointments the discipline which brings incorruptible treasure. The 'benefits' of God are not the pleasant things merely, but all the things of pain and tears.

Loss : Gain of

Not long ago a violent earthquake alarmed the West of America; but whilst some surface property suffered, the shock did not prove an uncompensated disaster, for in tearing asunder the rocks and mountains the earthquake showed the district to be rich in unsuspected gold. This is a figure of a vaster truth. The

whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now, great is the overthrow and suffering, yet the throes have brought within our knowledge and grasp magnificent possibilities and hopes. The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is being, and shall be, revealed in us. Let us take our harp from the willow, and sing in the dark day.

Loss : Mystery of

Michael Angelo defined sculpture as 'the art that works by force of taking away.' This well describes the method of God in dealing with some of His children. Sometimes He goes very far indeed with the painful process. The other day we read of the quarrying of a block of marble weighing twenty tons, but by far the greater portion of it had to be sacrificed ere the sculptor's ideal was realized. By a thousand blows, by the chiselling away of one flake after another, by endless grinding and friction, the marble is chastened into beauty, and by a corresponding process of deprivation are many of God's loved ones disciplined into perfection. Strength, beauty, dear ones, fortune, rank, with other precious shards, are smitten into the dust. Yet all the while that this process of humiliation is going

on with the righteous, the most unworthy of mankind live in affluence, power, and luxury. No wonder that the saints of old, with an imperfect revelation, were made uneasy by this spectacle, and tempted to complain, 'Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocency.'

Loyalty to Highest

It is often painful for an artist with a rare conception of beauty to pursue his vocation in a world destitute of true taste and sympathy. The great French peasant-painter, J. F. Millet, affords a recent striking example. He painted pictures of profoundest pathos and truest beauty, yet no one would look at them. His wife and children needed bread, and he had no money wherewith to go and see his dear old mother away in the country; but he sternly refused to debase his art for the sake of the much-needed lucre. Friends wrote him entreatingly, 'It is necessary to make some concessions to leading and paying taste.' He would make no concessions to paying taste, but become one of the immortals because he remained loyal to his vision of holy beauty, dying in poverty and obscurity. And thousands of men in intellectual vocations fight hard and suffer bitterly because they will be

perfect, making no concessions to clap-trap and vulgarity. This is also true in regard to moral life. He who cherishes a high ideal and determines to walk in the light must be prepared for sacrifices of popularity, promotion, and gain, even when those sacrifices touch tenderest spots. A noble soul intent on perfectness of life is familiar with painful dilemmas.

Loyalty: Reward of

If by the grace of God, we overcome, the struggle gloriously strengthens and enriches our whole being. We are greater in mind, stronger in principle, purer in spirit, larger in capacity for joy and service. Suwarrow, the Russian general, having captured an enemy's town, emptied the magazine and struck the bullets into medals for his troops, so that what was meant to pierce the soldier's breast shone on it an ornament and glory. Whilst in the fiery ordeal we abide loyal to God's love and righteousness, the missiles which hurtle through the air are transformed into jewels for our bosom, stars for our brow. In other words, the strife of life gives fullness, perfection, confirmation to all the graces of our spirit.

Miracles of Christ

Kennan, in his *Tent Life in Siberia* supplies several anecdotes of the extreme perplexity that our instruments of science cause to the savage mind. 'Our native guide asked me to show him the compass. I unscrewed the cover, and showed him the blue quivering needle still pointing to the north. He examined it curiously. I tried to explain to him its nature and use, but I could not make him understand, and he walked away firmly believing that there was something supernatural about the little brass box.' Again: 'I shall never forget the utter astonishment with which a band of Chookchees once looked through my field-glass. I gave the glass to one of them, and told him to look through it at another native who happened to be standing out on the plain, at a distance of perhaps two hundred yards. The expression of blank, half incredulous surprise which gradually came over his features as he saw that native brought up, apparently within a few feet, was irresistibly comical. He did not dream for a moment that it was a mere optical illusion; he supposed that the wonderful instrument had actually transported the man physically from the distance of two hundred yards up to the place where he stood, and as he held the glass to

his eyes with one hand he stretched out the other to try to catch hold of him.' As these savages were puzzled by processes and effects which they could not understand, although the whole thing is perfectly clear to us; so are we perplexed by the miracles of our Lord, not because they involved anything unnatural, but because He had a perfect knowledge of laws we have not yet grasped.

Misgiving and Fear

Describing the terror occasioned by an earthquake, Humboldt writes: 'When we suddenly feel the ground move beneath us, a mysterious and natural force with which we are previously unacquainted is revealed to us as an active disturbance of stability. A moment destroys the illusion of a whole life, our deceptive faith in the repose of nature vanishes, and we feel transported, as it were, into a realm of unknown destructive forces. We no longer trust the ground on which we stand.' Tragic, indeed, but how much more so the shock to feel the Rock of Ages sinking beneath our feet!

'Nevertheless I am continually with Thee.'

Moral Dangers

We are told that coral reefs are not to be looked upon as simple stationary structures, but as living, moving things, ever changing their form and aspect. Vessels are constantly being lost upon coral reefs in different parts of the world, owing to the inaccuracy of their charts. There is abundant evidence to show that charts of coral reefs made one year are almost valueless twenty years afterwards. Much the same is true of the moral dangers of life. Ancient in character, they constantly emerge in special forms and original disguises, giving no place for presumption, calling for habitual awareness, lest we make shipwreck of faith, conscience, character, and hope.

Moral Law

So far as *the majesty of the law* is concerned, our Lord proclaims it with utmost solemnity. We are taught by Him that it is no local, technical, or temporary enactment, but that its seat is the bosom of God, its sphere the universe, its obligation everlasting, and far from abating a jot or tittle of its requirements He emphatically confirms it, brings out its spirituality, enthrones it as the law of His kingdom.

Morality and Sense of Sin

Ruskin insists that sculpture should never imitate the work of man, all such representation being illegitimate and ineffective; it must confine itself to the representation of the work of God—the flower of the grass, the leaf of the tree, the fruit of the garden, the human form divine. If, then, plastic art must occupy itself only with God's work, and if it becomes false and feeble when it forsakes such representation, how much more must it be so in the realm of morals! To attain reality and perfection morality must be full of the sense of God, must be an imitation of God, and be kindled and sustained by the breath of God. There is no true glory of character except as it finds its source, reason, ideal, life, and reward in the thought of the eternally righteous God.

National Ills, and National Character

Mary Moody Emerson makes a very discriminative observation in one of her letters: 'When I get a glimpse of the revolution of nations—that revolution which seems for ever going on in this part of creation—I remember with great satisfaction that from all the ills suffered, in childhood and since, from others, I felt that it *was rather the order of things than*

their individual fault.' Yes, the revolutions of nations, with all their tragedies, are never exclusively the fault of individuals, but arise in 'the order of things,' or, rather, their disorder in the general ill doing. 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' (Amos iii. 6). The impending calamity came from Jehovah, a national corrective for national corruption; although the judgement first strikes the great, as the lightning first strikes trees that are tallest.

Nature: The Directive Spirit in

Consider the following from Tyndall's *The Forms of Water:* 'It is worth pausing to think what wonderful work is going on in the atmosphere during the formation and descent of every snow-shower; what building power is brought into play; and how imperfect seem the productions of human minds and hands when compared with those formed by the blind forces of Nature! But who ventures to call the forces of Nature blind? In reality, when we speak thus we are describing our own condition. The blindness is ours; and what we really ought to say, and to confess, is that our powers are absolutely unable to comprehend either the origin or the end of the operations of Nature.' So, according to

our scientist, Nature is not blind; there is presumably a directive Spirit in the universe.

Obscure: Value of the

In a superficial review of the history of science a new idea or a striking experiment is associated with an individual name and a particular date. Hence we receive a general impression that science proceeds by sudden inspirations; yet, on closer examination, we find that the salient features are connected with each other, and that the great landmarks are generally reached only by a succession of intermediate steps, some of which may be as important as the last which culminates in the final discovery. Time tends to efface the intermediate steps, so it is difficult to obtain a correct view of the continuity of science.

Panic v. Faith

We speak of losing our presence of mind as 'losing our head'; a serious loss indeed. We have just been told of some remarkable experiments having been made in insect grafting, when it was found with what impunity the head of the insect might be removed and the creature yet continue endowed with activity and life, capable of strange things.

The decapitated beetle has so far the advantage over the rational mortal. In more senses than one we cannot afford to lose our head. The vivid simile represents fierce energy divorced from the control of intelligence and will, and in that condition no course is too absurd for men to follow, no fate too terrible for them to provoke. In their frenzy they have been known to rush again into the flames from which they had just been rescued. Panic in the moral life is the result of serious error, the cause of the most melancholy consequences. Not to give ourselves time to think, but to act hastily, blindly, desperately, is a form of insanity, and in the moral life threatens utter ruin.

Peace of Christ

We are told that in some great explosions the sound may be transmitted by the atmosphere to a hundred miles or more from its source. But between the source of the sound and the distance lies a tract, the silent zone, within which the sound is rarely or never heard. Owing to the configuration of the ground, the alarming sound travels all around and above, and the dwellers in the silent area remain undisturbed by its violence and menace. So in the fellowship of Christ do

His disciples find the secret place of the Most High, and, hidden there, are safe from the fear of all voices of alarm, conflict, and destruction.

Penitence : Blessings which Follow

A Jewish tradition records that where David wept day and night over his great sin an incense-tree sprang up; and the pangs of true penitence are the prelude to the incense of thanksgiving and praise. The natural griefs of daily human life are ever being sanctified to the augmentation of our power and gladness. The breaking down of the body, the marring of domestic felicity, the spoiling of fortune, the disenchantments of time, the pathos of the impending end, all are mysteriously blessed to the deepening and refinement of the obedient spirit.

Pleasures : Dangers of

One of our travellers tells of a peculiar experience that happened to him as he voyaged on the coast of South America. Whilst his ship lay at anchor it became lily-bound. The growth of vegetation in that climate is, of course, very rapid, and during a few calm days the vessel became the centre of a great floating island of beautiful lilies. But the

beauty was soon forgotten in the danger. They accumulated so quickly that the chains became entangled, and, yielding to the flow of the tide, the flowery mass caused the vessel to drag her anchor and to drift in a wrong direction. Eventually the crew had a long and tedious task with cutlasses and hatchets to release their barque from the imprisoning flowers—a picture of the embarrassing effect of eminent success. How often has an accumulation of the gay and golden flowers of opulence and pleasure accounted for the fatal drifting of noble lives!

Poverty

The blighting action of straitened circumstance on the intellectual life is recorded on numerous pages of sad biography. Some flowers never open, and in every generation men are born gifted with potential powers they can never express, because stultified by chronic adversity. In modern times Dr. Johnson saw the fatal force of grinding poverty. When left destitute by the death of his father, he writes in his diary: 'I now, therefore, see that I must make my own fortune. Meanwhile let me take care that the powers of my mind may not be debilitated by poverty, and that indigence do not force me into any

criminal act.' The modern Solomon, as well as the historic one, saw the peril of extreme need, alike to the intellectual and moral life.

Prayer

A few moments spent with God in prayer work miracles. When fortune frowns and perils are imminent, hide thyself for a moment in thy chamber, and there will be rainbow tints in the cloud and the morning star on the hem of night. 'And now for a little moment grace hath been showed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape . . . that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage' (Ezra ix. 8). How happy we are if we avail ourselves of the little moment of grace which God never fails to vouchsafe! To do this is to wax strong, to find the tears drying in our eyes, to be more than conquerors, to see the shadow of death change into the morning.

Problem of Existence

It is unreasonable to expect that we can apprehend forthwith all the ways of God. It seems to me that in this matter the way

in which our scientists accept a painful problem is very often an example to the saints. For instance, the serious naturalist is painfully exercised by the presence of so much cruelty in Nature, yet by an intellectual humility he reconciles himself to the dark fact that he cannot understand. Miall writes: 'I can never read Fabre's *Souvenirs Entomologiques* without a shudder. What may be the solution of the mystery, and how so much benevolent foresight can be reconciled with so much cruelty, it is not for the naturalist to explain, though the mere naturalist finds it hard to shake off these thoughts when they have once come up in his mind. . . . But let us be careful not to speak as if our little plummets had sounded the depths of the universe. Those who have surpassed their fellows in the improvement of natural knowledge have always been the first to admit that what they have come to know is lost in the infinitude of the unknown.' Other students of Nature follow in the same strain. If this be the true way in which to regard the dark problems of Nature, is it not the true way in which to regard the dark problems of human life? We 'know in part,' and it becomes us to wait for the knowledge of that other part before we despair.

Punishment: Self-inflicted

We lodge railing accusations against Nature on account of her various disturbances from which we suffer. We accuse her of 'brutal indifference' to human welfare, as shown in the numerous catastrophes she occasions, until it might be concluded that in these disorders is found the main source of the human tragedy. We assume that, once free from volcanoes, earthquakes, blizzards, deluges, plagues, and famines, our paradisaical state would practically be regained. How mistaken it all is! Our sufferings caused by the violence of the elements are absolutely insignificant when compared with the woes we inflict upon ourselves by our inhumanities, vices, and crimes. Moral defect and lawlessness explain our miseries. Earthquakes, eruptions, tempests, and all similar natural evils are mosquito bites that occasion little more than passing inconvenience when compared with the bitter distresses we occasion ourselves by greed, injustice, falsehood, intemperance, and impurity.

Purity of Heart

An investigation in Switzerland has shown that mortality caused by organic disease of

the heart decreases as the altitude of the habitation rises. Is it not true that as we raise the ideal and tone of life, walking with God on high places, that the false motions of the heart are checked, its secret idolatries rebuked, its wanderings recalled, its waning fires relighted? So nothing in our whole nature ought to rest on a lower level of motive, principle, or design; 'all that is within us' ought to respond to the uplifting, transfiguring grace.

Reading

Reading that presents no difficulties, calls for no attention or effort of comprehension, is little to our advantage. The literature that stretches the brain is alone worth while. A great work that I do not readily grasp puts me in mind that there is something that I do not know, which, to begin with, is a distinct benefit; and, as it is a truly great work, it also gives me a clue to the larger knowledge lying beyond. According to Edmund Burke, 'A clear idea is another name for a little idea,' and we come to intellectual robustness only as we wrestle with great ideas which are not clear all at once. We are little the better for sermons which dispense with the reasoning faculty, however

much such sermons may be preferred. The dimmest glimpse into a new world is infinitely more to be coveted than the most brilliant commonplace.

Reason and Emotion

Buckle writes: 'The emotions are as much a part of us as the understanding; they are as truthful; they are as likely to be right. Though their view is different, it is not capricious. They obey fixed laws; they follow an orderly and uniform course; they run in sequences; they have their logic and method of inference.' And Anatole France, far outside the orthodox camp, sanctions the same view: 'Yes, this blessed and saving truth is found underlying all Religions—that men have a more trustworthy guide than reason, and that we should rather obey the dictator of the heart.' The great spiritual instincts arose with us out of the infinite; they pertain to the cosmic wisdom, and are the master-lights of all our seeing.

Religion: Deep-Rooted

The honest seed that strikes deep in good ground survives severest ordeals. Mrs. Workman, in recounting her adventures on

the Himalaya, tells how marvellously trees will thrive in the most extraordinary situations. 'A curious phenomenon occurs in the growth of evergreen trees, probably mostly cedars, of rather large size, high up, at altitudes of 13,000 feet and over, in niches upon projecting rocks, and even upon vertical or nearly vertical rock-faces of mountains and along the sky-lines of their ridges, where no soil, apparently, exists, and where no water could lodge and remain. They strike their roots into the crevices and joints of the rocks, to which they hold firmly. Here they flourish with a vitality and luxuriance of growth that would do credit to trees planted in good, well-watered soil. How they can derive nourishment from dry, sun-baked rocks seems a mystery.' The mystery, however, is easily explained when we remember how the roots strike deep, and reach far-off, hidden sources of vitality. Thus is it with the trees of the right-hand planting of the Lord; they continue in beauty and fruitfulness in places, and through seasons, which seem utterly to forbid such excellence; deeply rooted in the love and fear of the living, unchangeable God, their leaf does not wither, and their fruit abides in everlasting perfection.

Religion: Latent

There is a great deal of latent religion in the unconverted. The unsaved are already in possession of the truth that saves. William James is certainly correct when he writes: 'In the matter of conversion I am quite willing to believe that a new truth may be supernaturally revealed to a subject when he really *asks*. But I am sure that in many cases of conversion it is less a new truth than a power gained over life by a truth always known.' The truth is there, but a bedridden truth. The conscience is already alive, accusing, or excusing. The affections are often strangely warmed toward the Giver of all good. And a Divine energy renders the will capable of determination to the obedience of the faith.

Religion: Its Relation to Morality

As in Eastern jungles orchids flourish whose most delicate and beautiful blossoms distil scents with the pungency of carrion, so the most repulsive vices affront us amid all the intellectual and artistic brilliance of an atheistic and a secular age. History gives no encouragement to expect pure, noble, heroic lives in that atmosphere. It shows

most convincingly that when a God of holiness is forgotten, a moral universe ignored, and the spiritual rewards of virtue are no longer sought, human nature soon grows wild, rots, exhausts itself, and perishes.

Renunciation

Dr. Samuel Johnson found that the drinking of wine was a snare to him, and although inordinately fond of the indulgence he became a total abstainer. At the banquets he attended, and almost made immortal, he only drank water whilst the rest drank wine. On those festive occasions there sat with him some of the greatest men England has known —Oliver Goldsmith, the most charming of authors; Sir Joshua Reynolds, a prince of painters; Edmund Burke, the philosophic statesman; David Garrick, whose 'death eclipsed the gaiety of nations'; and several other illustrious characters;—yet it always seems to me that Johnson drinking water was the grandest figure of them all; not for his intellectual qualities, remarkable as these were, but on account of his sterling heroism. It may be said that he showed his weakness, and he did; but his bodily infirmity served only as the background for his moral grandeur.

Renunciation: Painful

It was no easy thing for Israel to renounce its idolatry, for idolatry was rooted in strong, vicious passions to which it gave sanction, opportunity, and stimulus; and to-day men often prove it a real martyrdom to forswear the vices which have got such hold upon them. In the *Inferno* Dante entered a gloomy wood where he found men changed into trees; and when the poet unwittingly broke off a little spray from one of them, the trunk cried, 'Why dost thou mangle me?' whilst from that splinter 'issued forth together both words and blood'—a graphic picture of the anguish of awakened and resolute penitents as they tear from them the lusts which tyrannize and destroy the soul.

Rest: Need of

Happy are they who understand that their melancholy is no sign of the divine absence or anger, but only an indication of one of His methods of safeguarding His children. For such it certainly is. Dealing with physical life, Professor J. A. Thomson writes: 'There is a deep reason why high-level activity cannot be for long continuous, why it must be interrupted by periods of rest.

It is continuity that kills. The quiescence of winter is the inevitable pause in a strenuous life.' Does not the high-level activity of the spiritual life also call for a period of rest; does not the strenuous soul need the quiescence of winter? Such pauses are ordained by God for deep and merciful reasons, and our faith may justly regard them as such. If the chrysalis were possessed of consciousness it would have some bad five minutes on the way to its body of glory and the summer sun, but it duly arrives; so shall we.

Sanctification and Ethics

A French art critic writes: 'Neither the refinements of elegance nor the refinements of intelligence are compatible with virtue.' A shopkeeper would certainly exact ready money from such a dainty customer. Revelation knows of no refinements incompatible with virtue; all the refinements, perfections, transcendentalisms, on which it insists signify a severer and sublimer virtue. The saint is not to be known by a uniform or a shibboleth. Whatever verbal exposition of sanctification may be nearest to the fact, let us not forget that the final test of its nature and profession is ethical.

Sanctification: Sudden or Gradual?

A controversy amongst theologians, once acute, is still revived from time to time. It turns upon the question as to whether sanctification is gradual or instantaneous, whether it is attained by one definite act or by a more or less prolonged striving; some holding that in a favoured hour, by an act of consecration and faith, the believer scales the heights of purity and joy; whilst others dogmatically contend for the ascent by degrees through the sanctification of the discipline of life. May not both theories be true? Not so long ago it was the dogmatic assertion of the evolutionist that a new species of plant was the result of a long series of minute and imperceptible modifications, and that anything of the nature of a leap was unthinkable; but now sudden, inexplicable variations in plant life are generally recognized, and it seems likely that the science of the future will find a place for both explanations. Why may not the evolution of character comprehend the two rival methods of sanctification—the act of faith and the habit of faith, the discipline of many days and experiences and the sudden vision and uplifting that puts all life on a higher plane and brings into it a purity, power, and joyousness that it never knew

before? The two theories are reconciled in the experience of many saints.

Scepticism: Unscientific

Sir Henry Holland informs us of the failure of Wollaston, the great chemist. 'The habitual scepticism of his mind was a hindrance to his own scientific career. This was strikingly shown in the circumstances attending the discovery of the metal Palladium; and at a later time in relation to the greater discovery of the electro-magnetic rotation. Though the first to denote the dark lines in the solar-spectrum, the germ of so many later researches, he did not himself carry the observation further. That aid which hypothesis, duly limited, renders to experimental inquiry, he unduly disdained and put aside. He would have accomplished more had he doubted less.'

Security: Its Secret

When in spring the beech and chestnut are scorched by the east wind and fade mournfully, the oak and birch stand glorious in their fresh verdure, not a leaf smitten: the east wind is nothing to them; their fibre is stouter, their life more robust; in their foliage circulates

a triumphant vitality. So, if we are to brave successfully the influences of a sinful and godless environment, our heart must be kept rich with heavenly virtue. 'The trees of the Lord are full of sap.'

Spiritual Selection

The roots of plants have a peculiar property known to botanists as 'selective capacity,' which enables them to find and absorb such substances in the soil as are essential to their growth, although these may exist in extremely minute quantity. Plants requiring lime will grow on granite which contains the least amount of lime. Seaweeds absorb from sea-water sufficient phosphorus—one of the essential elements to the life of all plants—though the amount of phosphorus in sea-water is so excessively small that it is quite impossible to estimate it. But think of the 'selective capacity' of the soul! How it draws the sap of reverence, gratitude, wisdom, courage, beauty, from sites, material, and events apparently destitute of all moral value whatever! The great body of the saints trudges along the common highway gathering at every step dust of spiritual gold, where the carnal eye discerns only the dismal, the contemptible, the painful.

Service of Christ: Glory of

How elevating the thought to the modest worker, that his toil is recognized on high, and that it contributes in a humble degree to the glory and perfecting of the universe! I remember to have heard the late George Dawson say, in effect, 'I should have been proud to have held the spy-glass for Columbus, to have picked up his fallen brush for Michael Angelo, to have carried Milton's bag, to have blacked Shakespeare's boots, or to have blown the bellows for Handel.' If to a discerning mind it is a proud distinction to render a trifling service to human greatness, who shall express the glory and joy of standing by the Master's side, and at His bidding add to the world some perfecting touch!

Sin: Its Limitations

The Chinese proverb asks: 'What would not the lion do if he were the monkey also?' But Nature does not permit the combination, lest all other life in the jungle should cease. As these limitations are fixed in the constitution of predatory beasts, so they appear in another form to restrain men of similar type. As Edmund Burke writes: 'Men that are greatly guilty are never wise. Guilt is a never rational thing; it distorts all the

faculties of the mind; it perverts them; it leaves a man no longer the free use of his reason; it puts him into confusion.'

Sin: Its Persistency

We remember hearing a gentleman say that on visiting his father's farm after an absence of sixty years he found the thistles flourishing on the same spots they occupied when he was a boy. Is it not too often the same with our moral infirmities and faults—we resent and deplore them, yet they survive, they strengthen with the years? The covetous hold their gold with a still firmer grip when their hand has become too feeble to hold anything else. The intemperate suffer what cannot be told, yet stammer, 'I will seek it yet again.' The wrathful are ashamed of their temper, and yet their last sun goes down on their wrath. So with pride, envy, vanity, and all the vices. Every abortive struggle with evil passion seems to leave it only more rooted and vigorous. We clearly discern the rebellious principle entrenched in our humanity, yet are pathetically incapable of dislodging it.

Sin: Revealed

The peasant on the Continent, when about to commit a sinful act, is said to draw a veil

over the picture of his patron saint; but the thickest curtain hides no deed of shame from the eyes of Him who ponders all our doings. Finally, He, and He alone, knows 'the hearts of the children of men.' 'Thus saith the Lord: Thus have ye said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind' (Ezek xi. 5).

Sin: Secret

Sir James Paget says that morbid germinal substance will remain 'lethargic' for years, and then become active, growing in its own method, perhaps with fatal consequence. The horticulturist and physiologist may not know precisely why these buds and germs continue so long inactive, and then suddenly become injurious and fatal—much that is mysterious occurs in all morbid processes: but the main cause is found in the alternations of the general health of the body and the tree; the fullness and brightness of the life holding the malady in check, whilst any abatement in that life gives the dismal elements and tendencies opportunity to assert themselves. It is much the same with our higher life. Who can say how many and formidable are the germs of evil sleeping in the best of us? 'Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults.'

Sin: Its Spirituality

We do not approach a true conception of the nature of sin until we recognize its spirituality. We must cease to confound it with any motions of the body, any defects of matter, or with any traits of animalism, and find its secret in the defiled conscience, the perverted reason, the misplaced affections, the infirm will. It must be convicted in its essence, and source, and not confused with vehicle or instruments. It is the 'carnal mind,' yet mind; the 'flesh,' yet 'the mind of the flesh.' It must be resolved into what at first and last it is, a question of self-will setting at defiance the universal and eternal law.

Social Service

John Stuart Mill and Roebuck when young were great walkers, and on their country excursions Mill would fill his pockets with sweet violet seed and scatter it in the hedges as he went along. Practically a century has elapsed since that sowing, and very likely the posterity of the pleasant plants still survives, delighting the eye with its purple, scenting the air with its fragrance. So the germs of beauty and blessing that we sow

by the wayside as we trudge along will spring up to inspire joy and hope in the pilgrims who follow us long after we sleep under the grass. No true worker is insulated, no real service a disjointed endeavour.

Soul: Defence of

The evil that is about us is best disarmed and paralyzed by the robustness of the soul. In vain do we contend against the manifold temptations of life by any kind of external precaution; we are never safe until we know also what the apostle calls 'the power that worketh in us.' It has long been seen that it is unsatisfactory to attempt to defend the trees of the forest and orchard by white-washing or anointing, or indeed by any exterior precaution, from the parasites which afflict them; therefore the forester now bores into the very heart of the tree, and introduces chemical solutions which mingle with the sap and circulate through every branch and leaf, thus rendering the tree absolutely safe from its old foes—they refuse to touch it. How little the New Testament approves of coddled character! how sparingly it legislates for external defence! Christ and His disciples were ever insistent that the understanding should be full of light, the conscience

exercised into acuteness, the will dowered with strength, the heart filled with love, because they well knew that these the wicked one toucheth not.

Soul: and Sorrow

Naturalists note the diverse methods of the divine operation in the material world. Fabre, for instance, reminds us that so far as plants are concerned sunlight is the rich palette whence Nature draws her colours, making glorious grass and flower: but it is exactly the opposite of this with the insects most gifted with splendid colour; the wonderful hues that would seem stolen from a sunbeam are really elaborated in darkness, deep in the ground, or in the decayed trunk of an aged tree! God's ways are manifold, and yet complementary; His wonderful chemistry is equally effective in conditions apparently remote and contradictory. 'Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.'

Spiritual Development

The scriptural conception of the saintly character and career is that of an ever-increasing

strength and joyfulness. So far the scriptural conception is in agreement with the general law. It was said of William Pitt, 'He never grew; he was cast'; yet, as a rule, the normal person grows mentally in power and resource. Occasionally a youthful saint may astonish us by his completeness of character and exceptional ripeness of experience; but the law of the spiritual life is that we go from strength to strength. Revelation everywhere assumes this.

Spiritual Enemies

We are continually being reminded of parasites of extreme subtlety which work mischief in our body. These lowest forms of life, whose very existence is overlooked by the multitude, occasion the most terrible epidemics. Little is known of their history, and, indeed, some of the most obnoxious of them have never been seen; the highest magnifying power fails to make them manifest, so that they are scheduled as 'ultra-microscopic.' Yet, however invisible, the loathsome creatures demonstrate themselves beyond question by poisoning nobler life. If, then, we are required to believe in invisible creatures which infect the flesh, we are not altogether unscientific when we believe in

the existence of unclean spirits intent on poisoning the soul. And if certain fierce diseases prove the presence of these obscene parasites of the flesh, may we not suspect that the strange, wild, inhuman, destructive lusts and crimes of men contain an element of infernal evil?

Spiritual v. Material

The greatest of the masters are satisfied that matter and mechanism do not constitute the whole of things; that there is ever something within or behind appearances that can neither be described nor defined. Professor Simpson writes: 'Naturalism is an incomplete interpretation of phenomena.' And again: 'Scientific conceptions point beyond themselves.' When all has been said about the attributes of matter that can be said, a mystery remains that no experimentalist can solve, and the mystery appears more important than the matter.

Spiritual Receptivity

Unless we have aspiration, faith, receptivity, the precious influences that encompass us are lost. The Sahara Desert is visited by tremendous rainstorms, but is none the better for them; not a drop but descends in vain,

for the heat evaporates the rain before the drops reach the sand. We may live in such an unsympathetic state that the rain and dew of heaven leave us unrefreshed and barren. 'They all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer' until the power came upon them. In the spirit of penitence, supplication, expectation, consecration, and unity must we await the heavenly visitation; and a plenteous rain shall fall in refreshing, life-giving showers on God's heritage, and make everything to live that now droops and dies.

Spiritual Vision

I knew a gentleman who at one time was engaged on the gold-fields of Australia. He was himself very unsuccessful, notwithstanding that he was in the close neighbourhood of the greatest finds ever made in that country, a mass of gold something like a hundred pounds weight being found near to his working. 'I was not five yards from the gold,' said he feelingly; 'I heard the shout of the man who found it,' he added with pathos. Thus many miss, as by a hair's breadth, the grandest treasure of all, not because of ill-fortune, but because their eyes are holden by the love of earthliness and sin; they hear the glad shout of many who have

found the gold that is good, and yet at last they themselves go out to God poor indeed.

Temper and Judgement

Astronomers suffer much from the inaccuracy of the images viewed in their telescopes in consequence of the disturbances in the atmosphere, common even in clear weather. Hence observatories have been established at stations where the atmosphere is calm and little disturbed by currents. But on investigation Professor Langley, of Washington, discovered that a good deal of the perturbation of telescopic images arises from currents *within the telescope itself*. The first important matter, therefore, if the astronomer would see clearly, is that he wholly eliminate the disturbance within the tube itself. Living as we do in a world where there is so much outside us to mar our spiritual vision, the first and essential thing is nevertheless that we free ourselves from the disturbing currents within—the moods, tempers, and sympathies which vex and falsely bias the soul.

Temper and Judgement

The International Bureau of weights and measures at Sèvres possesses a precision balance of extraordinary sensitiveness; the

oscillations are observed through a telescope, and to guard against perturbations due to the warmth of the operator's body he is required to stand twenty feet away from the instrument. Whenever we reason, we ought first of all to be careful that we stand twenty feet away from ourselves, for some such personal detachment is essential to a just conclusion.

Temptation

Dr. Samuel Johnson said: 'Humanly speaking, there is a certain degree of temptation which will overcome any virtue.' But the divine defence and inspiration never allow the faithful to reach that fatal degree. *We* cannot know where that fatal degree lies, but the Omniscient Friend does. He who has 'measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance,' knows all about the mystery of the spirit, the strength and weakness of every soul He has made; and no unequal weight, no disproportionate burden, no excessive strain, shall be allowed by Him who trieth the spirit. Depend upon it, many nice calculations are made in the heavenly economics. 'For He knoweth our

frame; He remembereth that we are dust' (Ps. ciii. 14). We must explain our moral failures by our personal unfaithfulness; never by any default of providence or grace.

Temptation: Flight from

Who is he that overcometh? Sometimes it is highly expedient to retreat from an exposed position. Wellington is reported to have said that 'the best general is he who knows best how to conduct a retreat.' Certainly such strategy is often as desirable as it is honourable in working out the moral life: the best thing we can do is abruptly to withdraw from dangerous places, persons, and practices. Plutarch tells of a general who fled from the field of battle, afterwards excusing himself that he 'did not run away, but embraced an advantage that lay behind him.' Such tactics usually savour of cowardice; in regard to the temptations of life, however, it is often the height of wisdom to run away. Joseph did. 'Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto Thee to hide me.'

Temptation: Folly of Surrender to

As Archer Butler puts it: 'We are the easy prey of every commonplace illusion, van-

quished by the novelty of seductions which were old in the days of Peter, and John, and Paul.' We have only to look into the paper any morning to see how true this is. Trappers of wild animals find it necessary continually to devise fresh snares, but the souls of men are being ensnared by gins, nets, and pitfalls smelling of the blood of ruined generations.

Temptation: Its Limits

There is a legend which tells how a beautiful princess put to the test the love of a youth who aspired to her hand. She cast a golden goblet into a roaring whirlpool, and challenged him to plunge into the abyss and recover it. After a painful interval the lover reappeared bearing the trophy, and laid it at the lady's feet. But when a second time she threw it into the deep all romance was at an end. The youth turned away disenchanted, and the multitude scorned the heartless girl. The first trial proved the hero, the second trifled with his life. Having once proved our sincerity and courage, Heaven permits no superfluous discipline.

Temptation: Its Resistibility

One of the gods of the South Sea Islanders is reputed to have made magic fish-hooks

which no fish can resist; but we may rely upon it that the devil has no such hooks to catch men.

Temptation: Sudden

Water, even in open vessels, may be lowered many degrees below its freezing temperature, and still remain liquid; it may also be raised to a temperature far higher than its boiling-point, and still resist boiling. This is due, Faraday held, to the mutual cohesion of the water particles, which resist the change of the liquid into either the solid or the vapourous condition. But if a particle of ice is thrown into the overchilled water, the cohesion is ruptured, and freezing immediately sets in; and if a bubble of air or steam is introduced into the superheated water, cohesion is likewise ruptured, and boiling immediately commences. Just as the water is below the freezing-point, or above the boiling-point, without doing either until a particle of matter or a bubble of air disturbs it and effects its transformation, so dangerous states of the soul may long remain latent until a trifling incident reveals the fact and precipitates the catastrophe. How often have we been in the mood of worldliness or of passion, without the faithlessness of the soul becoming manifest in act

or deed, when a very slight provocation would have revealed the inner susceptibility, and ranked up with the worldling and licentious!

Tests of Life

There are two methods of testing metals. One is known as the 'impact' test, in which fracture of the test-piece is effected by a single blow; the other is the 'fatigue' test, in some forms of which millions of repetitions of comparatively small stresses are required. We believe that the latter method is considered the most searching and severe. So, in life, we are more impressed by the sight of the dramatic stroke of shattering misfortune; yet the countless small stresses which test ordinary character are perhaps still harder to endure.

Time: Wise use of

Intensity of life is a mark of the greatest men. Of Darwin we read: 'One characteristic was his respect for time; he never forgot how precious it was. He never wasted a few spare minutes from thinking that it was not worth while to set to work.' His golden rule was 'taking care of the minutes.' In one of

his letters occurs this passage: 'A man who dares to waste one hour of time has not discovered the value of life.' The same conscientiousness in the economy of opportunity distinguishes the best men. In regard to our highest life and its interests there must be an equally strenuous faithfulness with that exhibited by the intellectually or commercially famous. So far as our own character is concerned, much depends upon wise husbandry. To make the best of the fugitive moment, as the bee sips the ephemeral flower, is to convert life into a real success; whilst dullness and negligence in regard to small opportunities may well leave us conscious failures.

Truth and Levity

There is an Eastern fable of a magician who discovered by his incantations that the philosopher's stone lay on the bank of a certain river, but was unable to determine its locality more definitely. He therefore proceeded along the bank with a piece of iron, to which he applied successively all the pebbles he found. As one after another produced no change in the metal, he flung them into the stream. At last he hit on the object of his search, and the iron became gold in his hand.

But, alas! he had become so accustomed to the touch-and-go movement, that the real stone was involuntarily thrown into the river after the others and irrecoverably lost. It was thus with the Athenian. He was a truth-seeker after a fashion, flippantly handling one philosophy after another, until at length, when the truth that turns all life into gold was in his grasp, he gaily flung it after the discarded theories that had mocked him, and lost forever the glorious secret.

Trouble: Its Limits

In *The Record of an Aeronaut* we are told of the vast difference that exists between being choked in a London fog and looking at it from above. When ascending, and reaching in a few minutes the brightest sunshine, the aeronaut marvelled at the shallowness of the cloud which was making life well nigh intolerable below, and he gazed spellbound at the matchless beauty of the upper surface of what we are accustomed to consider the embodiment of all hideousness. So short a distance, he found, separated the Londoner, wallowing and groaning in midday night, from purest skies and a scene of loveliness not to be matched in all the earth. Such are the swift transitions and strong contrasts of Christian

experience. In the shadow of a great trial it would seem as if there were no blue sky, no sun, no landscape in the livery of delight; yet experience often shows the shallowness of the cloud, and the beauty and glory it so thinly veils. When we take time to think of the moral end of trial, of the wisdom and love by which it is regulated, and of the sublime issues of it when faithfully endured, the forbidding cloud, the hideous fog, are transfigured; they become windows into heaven.

Trouble: and Prayer

The African has a proverb: 'The child that does not cry perishes for food on its mother's back.' If in the dark day we fail to appeal to the strong for strength we may perish too; but the cry of the forlorn ever avails to recover strength and hope. In the passage before us we have another illustration of the power of prayer. 'Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see.' The young man was in despair, but the old prophet knew the unfailing resource that once again proved its efficacy. Prayer is a revelation. It brings a vivid sense of unearthly help, a vision of horses and chariots of fire, of enfolding supernatural defence. What

before was, at the best, much of a notion, becomes an actuality—'that we may see.' Prayer is an inspiration. It identifies us with the vision, makes us sharers in the divine power, causes us to feel within ourselves the tramp of the fiery horses, the irresistibility of the triumphal cars.

Unaggressiveness

Whilst so much has been written by naturalists concerning the selfish ferocity of vegetation, it is refreshing to get an authoritative testimony to another effect. James Rodway, in describing the Guiana forest, observes: 'The orchids never fight, either among themselves or with other plants. Perhaps one of the reasons why they have been successful in life is their retiring, unaggressive nature. Nevertheless they have overcome difficulties before which other plants were obliged to give way.' How suggestive that in the tropical forest, where the struggle for air and sun is most intense, the least aggressive flower survives, overcomes difficulties before which militant plants succumb, and attains to a glory beyond them all! The moral ought not to be missed by civilized man!

Universe : One

Astronomers have ascertained the identity of the constitution of the worlds which fill the vastness of space; the spectroscope proves that the sun, moon, and stars are fashioned out of identical constituents, the chemistry of the worlds is the same, the vast, bright brotherhood of stars of every magnitude, position, and colour are all of one. Then the astronomer avers that no star dwells apart: a subtle ether fills all space, and binds the most distant worlds together by links stronger than adamant. So revelation assures us that the universe is one in a still grander sense; heaven sympathizes with earth, angels with men. The universe is not only made one by ethers, but by sympathies, seraphs are interested in shepherds, the highest stoops to the lowest, the strong help the weak, the pure rejoice in the salvation of the lost.

Unreality : Snare of

I remember when a child that a travelling theatre visited my native town, and with wonder and awe I watched the promenading on the outside stage—kings, queens, conquerors, cardinals, courtiers, all arrayed in purple and cloth of gold, decked with diadems,

glittering with gems, shining in the colours of the rainbow; but what a disenchantment it was to me to recognize a few days later Julius Cæsar on the dockside carrying deals!

Violence: Not Vigour

Alfred Stevens, the French artist and critic, reminds his brethren that 'Violence is not vigour.' Violence betrays the consciousness of weakness, the defect of vigour, not in art only, but in regard to all callings, aspirations, and efforts. The bravery of the ideal husbandman is not less than that of the happy warrior; indeed, the rustic conqueror is the happy warrior of bloodless fields. The strength of the mild and passive virtues is as the strength of ten, for such virtues were the special glory of the strong Son of God. 'The kingdom and patience which are in Jesus' (Rev. i. 9) describe the true and eternal ideal.

Vice and Virtue

We often see in the same individual rare virtues associated with the coarsest vices. J. M. W. Turner, the famous artist, is a striking example of this anomaly. Ruskin testifies concerning him: 'I knew him for ten years, and during that time had much familiar

intercourse with him. I never once heard him say an unkind thing of a brother artist, and I never once heard him find a fault with another man's work. I could say this of no other artist whom I have ever known.' He was also equal to most noble deeds. When no room could be found in the Academy for a picture of merit by a little-known artist, Turner took down one of his own pictures, sent it out of the Academy, and hung the rejected picture in its place. Well may Hamerton, his biographer, add: 'Now is not that a lovely little anecdote, a story to be told to the very angels in heaven? It is sweet and acceptable to our moral sense as the fragrance of the lily of the valley to our nostrils in the spring.' Yet the same man was guilty of the most vulgar vices. The mingling of splendid traits of character with shameful weaknesses is a common feature of our humanity, although not always so obvious as in the great genius.

Witness : Christian

'*Even so* let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven' (Matt. v. 16). We may do right things in an unfortunate manner; speak kind words with the accent of a threat; and make our good gifts

an offence. Against such defects of behaviour we must be on our guard. '*So* let your light shine' that no accidents abate its force and beauty. Specialists in glass point out that the surfaces and forms given to the glass through which light passes, or from which it is reflected, are often faulty and wasteful. By various means they have devised, sunshine can be turned to better account than ever before. Under certain conditions they increase the effective light to fifty times its present strength, they diffuse the illumination, they soften it, they concentrate rays of light into a single far-reaching beam, and give it most useful direction; they study its make, shape, and position, employing it as plain, rough, ribbed, or prismatic, as the situation may seem to demand. If we were to give equal consideration to the medium by which we reflect and transmit as 'the light of the world,' how immensely greater would be the effect we should produce!

Worry: Its Ill Effects

At bottom worry is atheism. 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him,' and there shall come a strength, a calm, a sweetness of soul altogether delightful. With butterfly, bee, bird, and a thousand creeping and flying

things nothing is more striking than the fortuitous manner in which they seem to live and move; yet, as a grand rule, their little lives are richly supplied and entirely effective: and if God care for these, shall His wonderful providence fail us? Semon found steadiness and tranquillity of mind most conducive to successful work and study; and resting in God, whilst we still do our best, will secure what worry misses.

Worship and Heredity

And it must be kept in mind that the more subtle effects of heredity are the most persistent. An accredited scientist writes: 'One important physiological law has of late come into prominence. This is the law that nervous phenomena, such as instincts, reflexes, and the like, are much more fixed and permanent in the animal economy than are details of structure in the skin, muscles, or skeleton.' We may infer, then, that the more psychic habits of our forefathers will survive the effects of their more bodily exercises. We come of a worshipping race, and it is just to conclude that after our forebears have for centuries cherished religious thought, responded to spiritual appeals, cultivated devotional habits, lived in the consciousness of a higher world,

we have acquired a certain religious bias which it is difficult to resist, impossible to destroy. The modern sceptic may ostentatiously abjure the Christian sanctuary, and verbally deny its creed; but the spiritual essence of the discarded system has got into his brain, and blood, and bones, influencing him for good in many ways, whether he recognizes and obeys it or not.

Worship: Of Heroes

In the *Memoirs* of Frederick Perthes it is related how he felt the necessity of a human and personal medium if he was to abide in the love of God. He then expected that through his devout wife he would reach the essence of life. He wrote her: 'Through the love of thee I shall rise higher and draw nearer to Him, in whom I find I cannot participate without some medium.' Again: 'To us, in our life here below, the love of the creature is given to educate us for the love of God.' But eventually Perthes became conscious that the love of God is not a spontaneous development of human love, and that the adored may become a snare and stultification. It is a special privilege to live in contact with rare goodness, to enjoy the intimacy of Christ-like men and women; yet the presence and

appreciation of high character does not necessarily develop into a personal love of God, any more than a passion for Nature necessarily leads to reverence of the Creator. Our Lord is the 'one Mediator' between God and men. He is the 'human and personal medium' whom Perthes sought.

Youth : Importance of

The leaves that suffer in the spring because of their weakness and sickliness breed and harbour many kinds of vermin which later on infect the whole tree, and not unlikely rob it of its summer pride and autumn fruit. So do the evil habits of youth cling to us, and in many mysterious ways poison our life, sap its strength, and impair its possibilities down to the latest limit. 'For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to inherit the iniquities of my youth.' Often, alas! blighted youth means premature death or total wreck. Mrs. Grote 'preferred a youth who had the right faults'; and we may often smile at certain juvenile faults of enthusiasm, audacity, and freehandedness, but the faults of youth which are truly such are fraught with the most serious significance. The withering of the 'fresh springing leaves' of life is a deep, sad disaster which only eternity may explain.

Youth : Its Temptations

Let the young men and maidens deal promptly and sternly with their first temptations to evil, and with the desires and appetites which render such temptations dangerous. A naturalist reminds us of a belief common in some country districts that people have 'cruel bad luck' all the year if they cannot manage to kill the first white butterfly that they see in the spring, and consequently the villagers chase and do their best to capture the first butterfly they see. The naturalist shows that this superstition has a meaning. A rural community would gain much if it could kill all the early white butterflies, for these are the parents and grandparents of the more numerous white butterflies and caterpillars which play such havoc with the garden later in the year. Killing the early wasp is another custom that has a similar utilitarian justification. With her successive broods multiplication quickens a hundredfold, and in autumn the original queen wasp may be surrounded by twenty thousand of her descendants. This is why man kills her in time. What a grand thing thus to deal with the faults of our nature and the temptations which appeal to us!

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